

Monster

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Monster by gin_and_chronic

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Summary:

Fifteen years after the Losers first defeat IT, Beverly Marsh returns to Derry to deal with the death of her estranged father.

Her return wakes Pennywise from his sleep twelve years early, and the two cross paths once again. How will they deal with existing in the same town, given their tense history and all that has transpired since they last met?

A novel-length story broken out into many bite-sized chapters.

On temporary hiatus until around the new year, but I am actively updating 'Captive Hearts' and 'Winter Fire' during that time

1. Greywater

Author's Note:

Ownership disclaimer: I don't own this story or any of its characters. All hail our king, Stephen.

Content disclaimers:

- Yes, this is a controversial ship. Don't like it, don't read.
- Pennywise is pretty OOC. I'm here for it. If you're not, see above note.
- This is my first piece EVER. You have been warned.

She knew venturing down into the sewers alone was a mistake from the beginning, but that fact was becoming harder and harder to ignore as she trudged through the thick water, littered with leaves and bits of stained fluff she could only imagine must have been the guts of teddy bears and other stuffed animals, stolen from children over many decades. Some had probably been down here since the sewer system was first built, back in the late 1800s.

“Greywater”, she bitterly laughed to herself, memories of a young Eddie Kaspbrak flooding her mind. Greywater was the least of her problems at this point. But she'd gone too far by now to think of turning back, assuming she could even find the exit again in this dark, damp maze of tunnels. She was, in quite a literal sense, in too deep.

Turning a corner, she froze, staring upwards in awe at the tower of toys appearing suddenly in front of her. This was it. The room where it all happened. It was smaller than she remembered. Or maybe she was just bigger now. Despite this, the sight filled her chest with more dread than it did as a child. Fuck... what was she *doing* here? What had she been *thinking* coming down here without backup?

A glimmer of light in her peripheral vision caught her attention. Quickly turning to look at its source, she spotted a stray ray of early evening light reflecting off a metal spoke on the old circus cart, the sun having reached a sufficiently low spot in the sky to make its

presence known through the high windows of the standpipe.

Oh, the circus cart. Home of that ridiculous little dance number. At least she had reached a point in her life where she could now look back on that piece of the whole event and laugh. She had to give it to him... IT... whatever. He had a sense of humor.

Looking around a bit more before deciding she was alone in this strange underground lair, she allowed herself a moment of reflection. Fifteen years had passed since she last found herself in Derry, and since her return the memories had come flooding back. Now 28, Beverly Marsh found herself recounting the events experienced by her 13 year old self through a strange, dreamlike lens. She honestly wasn't even sure if any of it actually happened before coming down here. A large part of her was convinced she'd walk into the sewers and find nothing but sewer, which is probably why she felt confident enough to come alone.

She'd only been back in Derry for a little over 24 hours now, having flown across the country when she received a call from the hospital that her father had passed away peacefully in his sleep after a short, relatively pain-free battle with pancreatic cancer. Since she was his next-of-kin, it was up to her to make arrangements, despite not having spoken to the man in several years.

Technically, she could have just allowed the city of Derry to foot the bill for a burial in an unmarked grave on the outskirts of town, but for all the ill will she held toward her father, she wouldn't allow that to happen. He had been sick his whole life, whether mentally or physically, and she was at least going to make sure he went out with dignity. Plus, she knew that returning to Derry eventually was a necessary step in overcoming the traumatic events of her childhood. *Closure*. Achieving it always sounded easier than it actually was.

That's how she ended up here, knee-deep in dirty water, standing in an underground room she'd believed was a figment of an overactive teen imagination for the past 15 years.

She always thought it strange that so much of Derry seemed to fade away into an eerie, dreamlike (or, more accurately, *nightmarelike*) blur as soon as she left to move to the relative metropolis of nearby

Portland. Such little time and distance shouldn't have had that effect, but all of Beverly's research on childhood abuse and trauma over the years told her that maybe it wasn't so out of the ordinary. The human brain goes to great strides to ensure you can make it through the next day, after all. Still, something about the whole thing never felt quite right to her.

Lost in her reflections on human psychology, and her foolhardy assumption that no threatening forces were present, she never heard the clown sneaking up from behind until she found herself rapidly spun around and hoisted up by the neck, uncannily like the position she found herself in as young teen.

Desperate for air, she willed both her hands to claw away the single gloved one wrapped around her throat. Finding her efforts entirely unsuccessful, she instinctively did the one thing that would help to alleviate the pressure on her jaw and allow her at least a bit of breathing room -- she swung both legs up and around his waist, resting her body weight atop his slender hips.

The action served its purpose, instantly relieving some of the pain and allowing her to suck in a large breath of oxygen, but it also had an unintended effect. Pennywise's balance was thrown off, causing him to stumble forward toward the stenciled wall of the cart. In a last-minute act of -- kindness? Chivalry? Meat preservation? -- the hand not grasping her throat threaded itself into her fiery locks to soften the blow and prevent her skull from slamming against the wood.

Further seeking to regain his footing in this new, awkward position, Pennywise pressed his hips forward to pin her lower body to the cart. With nearly every inch of their bodies touching, it occurred to Beverly that she was in the most dangerous position of her life, and a spike of delicious fear assaulted Pennywise's senses. Her fear soon turned to confusion, however, when he opened his mouth to ask an unexpected question.

"And who might *you* be?"

2. Awakening

Notes for the Chapter:

Author's Notes:

- Personal headcanon: Pennywise's weird clown voice is all for show, to add to the creepiness factor.

Did... Did he really not recognize her? Though older now, her features were almost identical to the last time he saw her. And who else would be so simultaneously stupid and courageous as to venture down into this cesspool alone?

She looked him dead in his large golden eyes. "You know who I am, asshole!" she spat angrily through her constricted throat. "I know you remember me."

He pulled back slightly to take in her features before a look of dawning realization appeared on his own. "Well, well, well. If it isn't *little Bevvie Marsh*. All grown up and looking for trouble. Couldn't keep away from the clown, could you?" he giggled, taunting her in the unnatural voice that had haunted her dreams for well over a decade, a cocky smirk appearing on his glossy red lips.

She glared at him, angry tears threatening to spill from her eyes, hands still attempting to claw his own away from her throat.

"How long has it been, *Bevvie*? You..." he paused and turned his head to the side for a moment, trying to work out the math in his head. "You should be older than you look. How many years have I been asleep?"

"Fifteen. Guess I cut your little nap short, huh?" she managed to choke out, still finding it in herself to revel in his look of drowsy annoyance and the satisfying knowledge that her return to Derry was what likely disturbed his sleep.

His hand tightened in her hair and his yellow eyes turned crimson as he snarled down at her with a mouth now full of sharp teeth. And,

despite the incredible danger in which she found herself, her body reacted to the overwhelming stimuli in the worst possible way. In one fell swoop, a rush of tingling arousal made its way to every nerve in her body.

Whatever threat he was prepared to deliver died in Pennywise's throat when he caught her changing scent and observed the way her features softened - mouth relaxing open and pupils dilating, wide blue eyes darting all over his face, taking in all of him for perhaps the first time ever.

He watched her watch him for a minute, trying to decipher this turn of events. The warm, spicy scent now rolling off her body seemed familiar to him, though he couldn't quite place it. But judging by the behaviors she was exhibiting, she wasn't feeling as panicked. She looked to be analyzing him with cautious curiosity. Her body and face were more relaxed, indicating that she was no longer gearing up for a deathly blow. She was just... examining him... taking in every crease on the crudely painted features he had chosen as his primary form long ago.

Breaking the deafening silence between them, he lowered his voice to almost a whisper, the high-pitched clown voice gone altogether, replaced by a deep, reverberant tone. "Bet you thought you'd never see this face again."

"I... had hoped not." she whispered back, eyes rising to meet his.

He swallowed hard, feeling his mouth run dry as soon as she made eye contact. "And now?"

She said nothing, just unwittingly dropped her eyes to his red lips.

"What are you doing here, Beverly?" he whispered in a tone that was suspiciously gentle, startling her into looking back up toward his eyes, only to find their focus had drifted toward her own mouth.

"Something stupid" she whispered back, perhaps more as a self-reprimand than a response to his question.

Caught up in the moment and lost in an entirely new kind of

dreamlike haze, she tentatively raised her arms to allow her fingertips to gently coast over his cheeks, causing him to release a nearly inaudible sigh as his eyes drifted closed. When he opened them once again to meet hers, Beverly was rendered breathless by the depth of emotion they held, having previously thought him incapable of experiencing anything but hunger and hate.

The hand still loosely wrapped around her neck drifted up to tuck a lock of hair behind her ear, and the corner of his mouth quirked into a small smile at the shiver the action drew from her. Unlike any other smile Bev had ever seen grace his features, she was startled to find that this one was... nice. Charming. *Real*.

Slowly -- painfully slowly -- he let his eyes drift closed again as he leaned forward to capture her lips in an unexpectedly chaste, gentle kiss.

3. Fire

Beverly froze, neither returning his kiss nor attempting to move away. After a few seconds, Pennywise pulled back and tentatively cracked open one eye to view her reaction, mentally preparing for the situation to devolve into a full-on brawl. If she had already stabbed him twice before, he figured that the threat was probably greater than ever now. And knowing Beverly Marsh, he was sure she'd find a way to land a blow despite him having the high ground at the moment.

Instead, he found her sitting still, eyes closed, face relaxed. She appeared to be deep in thought, contemplating her next move. For some reason, this unnerved Pennywise even more. He was now certain she was planning a sophisticated attack, and his body stiffened instinctively.

Suddenly, her eyes shot open and both of her hands darted out to grab onto the sides of his head and force his lips back to hers.

Her kiss was as hard as his was soft, and he opened his mouth to gasp in surprise. Since Beverly's mouth was already slightly ajar, his gasp caused their tongues to meet. As soon as that happened, both Beverly and Pennywise felt their stomachs drop delectably, as though they had just plummeted down the first hill on a rollercoaster. An undeniable heat spread through both of their bodies as they broke apart, panting heavily and staring at one another from beneath heavy lids.

When their mouths met again, they did so at the same time and with a matched intensity that made Beverly's toes curl and legs tighten around Pennywise's waist. Arms wrapping around the back of his neck, she pulled him ever closer until she felt they might just fuse into one being.

She poured all of her anger towards him, this town, and everything that transpired while she lived here into her violent assault on his mouth, but found herself snapped out of it by a softly gloved hand caressing her cheek tenderly, a stark contrast from her own behavior. She flinched at the realization of how aggressively she was behaving,

having always made it her life's goal to avoid becoming hot-tempered like her father. Even if she was directing this anger at a monster, she didn't want to have to think of herself as possessing those traits at all. She wanted as much distance between her and her father as possible.

At her flinch, Pennywise pulled away, assuming his own actions had caused the reaction. She caught her breath and opened her eyes widely, searching his face for any sign that he might have something dangerous in store for her, but found nothing but nervousness on his features. Her arms still wrapped around his neck, she reached a hand up to stroke his frizzy orange hair, and he let out a faint, inhuman sound. Beverly figured it was something akin to a purr, since his demeanor seemed to indicate that he enjoyed the touch.

Despite this reminder that the body she was coiled tightly around did not belong to a human male, the sound further fueled the fire now burning within her. She kissed him again, this time more gently but with just as much passion as before. Pennywise's hands began to roam over Bev's body as hers tightened in his hair. Suddenly he cupped the back of her head in one hand and her lower back in the other, pulling her away from the wooden wall she'd been pressed against. Kicking open the door to the circus cart with his foot, he carried her inside and deposited her on a soft, lone mattress adorned with dozens of mismatched pillows and blankets.

Hovering over her, he began to kiss his way down her neck and chest, undoing the top button of her blouse to slowly lick down the center of her cleavage while looking up at her from beneath his long black lashes. She shuddered, grabbing the hair at the sides of his head to pull him back up into a slow, wet, sensual kiss. Not breaking the kiss, his hands got to work unfurling the remaining buttons, and she moaned into his mouth.

He broke away to place open-mouthed kisses down her now bare stomach and toward the waistband of her jeans, pausing when he reached the metal button.

"Is this what you want?" he asked quietly, eyes darting up to meet hers.

She was taken aback by the question. Never in her life had she been

asked something like that. From the time her father first began to touch her to her most recent boyfriend in a long line of ill-advised romantic entanglements, men never asked Beverly permission before proceeding. They just took what they wanted.

The first time in her entire life that Beverly Marsh was asked to provide her consent, it was by a child-eating monster. She froze, unable to comprehend this development. After a moment of silence, she heard his voice break through her thoughts once more.

“Bev... tell me what you want,” he implored.

4. Connection

“Bev... tell me what you want,” he implored.

His voice brought her back to reality, and she gave herself a split second to reflect on the question. What *did* she want? She wanted... *this*. Even though it was probably the biggest mistake of her entire life, she couldn't deny it. She *wanted* this.

She opened her mouth to speak, the words coming out in a rushed, husky tone. “This. *You*. I want you.”

He flashed a small, fleeting smile up at her as he breathed a sigh of relief, the heat of his exhale ghosting across her navel. He made quick work of unbuttoning her jeans and slipping them off before taking his time placing those soft, open-mouthed kisses all the way up her body from her ankles to her collarbone. Hovering over her, he lifted his head to look her in the eyes.

Pennywise tenderly cupped Bev's cheek and whispered “I want you, too” before dipping his head down to give her what she was certain was the best kiss of her life.

When he pulled away, she opened her eyes to find that his costume had vanished entirely, leaving a bare body that she was relieved to find looked entirely human at first glance, aside from its unnatural skin tone and complete absence of body hair. Still, she had no idea what he was working with down below. Scared, she glanced down, expecting to see something barbed or multi-headed or maybe not even phallic in the slightest.

She let out a shaky sigh of relief when she realized that it also looked perfectly human. Aside from the color, of course. While it started out the same pale color as the rest of his skin, it gradually darkened to a deep purple closer to the tip, the same way his fingers did.

In a graceful motion, Pennywise wedged himself between Beverly's thighs, positioning himself at her warm, slick entrance. They both

looked up to meet eyes, and Pennywise paused for a moment, giving her ample opportunity to back out. When she instead tilted her hips up in an attempt to gain some friction, he pushed forward slowly, both letting out uncontrollable noises of pleasure -- hers a resonant moan, his a deep, primal growl.

Pennywise established a sinfully smooth and slow rhythm, pulling all the way out and pushing all the way back in like waves slowly crashing on a beach. It was unlike anything Beverly had ever felt -- a truly sensual experience that painted a stark contrast to all of the selfish jackhammering she had become accustomed to in past sexual forays. She felt a building pressure inside herself already, but knew that she would have to speed things up at least a bit in order to truly get there.

When he pushed forward next, his face hovering close to her own, she lifted her head up to capture his lips in a quick, heated kiss before whispering for him to move onto his back. He did so unquestioningly, though instead of laying flat, he had propped himself up into an almost upright sitting position against the many pillows. Bev shrugged internally. This isn't what she meant, but she could make this work.

He flinched slightly in surprise when she straddled him, giving her the impression that he'd probably never done this before. *"Makes sense."* she thought to herself. *"Can't imagine too many people have been jumping at the opportunity to sleep with a... whatever he is."*

Her train of thought was broken by his hands moving up to gently grasp her waist, lowering her down onto himself. She moaned loudly at the new sensations this position was providing. With him sitting upright, her hardened nipples grazed against his chest and her swollen clitoris rubbed deliciously against his pelvic area.

She rode him enthusiastically as his sharp-clawed hands roamed her body, his gasping noises and reverent gaze making her feeling more powerful than ever before. Beverly Marsh, just one simple human out of billions, was turning one of the most fearsome creatures in the universe into a quivering mess. She grabbed the orange hair at the sides of his bulbous head and kissed him deeply.

Pennywise's hands shot to her hips, pulling her down hard as he began to thrust his hips upward, taking control of the act. Pulling away from her mouth, he kissed and licked at her neck before bringing his mouth to her ear. "I always knew you would taste incredible" he growled, drawing an uncontrollable moan from her throat.

Squirming on his lap, Bev found herself rapidly approaching the edge. Taking note of how his behavior caused her changing scent and behavior, Pennywise continued kissing and lightly nipping at the side of her throat. "Do you like this, Beverly? Do you like how I feel inside you?" he whispered huskily, pulling back to look into her eyes.

Bev was well past the point of being able to form words, so she simply nodded fervently, eyes locked onto his, moaning her approval.

Feeling as though he was approaching the edge of a cliff, Pennywise's mouth fell open in a look of awe and wonder. They continued to move together in perfect synchronization, eyes staring deeply into one another's souls and hot breath intermingling. They were both so close, and just needed one tiny thing to throw them over the edge. Pennywise quickly moved his head forward to kiss Bev passionately, moaning into her mouth.

The kiss served its intended purpose, and Bev quickly tensed up, keening loudly as she came. Her walls pulsed around him hard, throwing him over the edge. His intense, powerful pulsations hit Bev's internal muscles in just the right spot to prolong her orgasm. By the time it was over, she clung to him, quivering and dripping in sweat.

After a moment of stillness, Pennywise placed a tender, closed-mouth kiss on Bev's lips and repositioned his body so that he could lay flat on his back. When she finally worked up the strength to do so, Bev removed herself from his softening member and laid down beside him, head on his chest and one arm thrown laxly over his midsection.

With his hand stroking her bare skin gently, she fell into a deep sleep.

5. Revelations

About 20 minutes after falling asleep, Beverly awoke suddenly to the feeling of Pennywise trying to move his arm from underneath her. He'd tried to put up with the discomfort for as long as possible, but had reached his limit.

Bev tilted her head up to look at his face, finding that it sported a terrifying, jagged snarl. Truthfully, he was snarling at himself for having woken her, but her fear had already begun to return in her now clear-minded post-coital state. So, naturally, his facial expression added to her growing discomfort.

"Are... are you going to kill me?" she asked in a small, shaky voice.

He was surprised by this question, eyes rapidly shifting their focus to her scared face. He hooked a dark finger under her chin and lifted her head, urging her to look him in the eyes. "That depends... Are *you* still going to try to kill *me*?"

"That... depends." she echoed.

He nodded curtly, seeming to accept her predicament. "Well, then," he said, wrapping his newly-freed arm around her to pull her close to him, her head once again resting on his toned chest. "I suppose we better enjoy the time we have together."

Beverly felt him press a soft kiss to the top of her head as his hand drew invisible patterns on the skin of her back. She allowed herself to relax slightly and enjoy his gentle treatment, feeling a bit safer for the time being.

"Why did you come back?" he asked quietly, his hand still drawing light circles on her bare skin.

"My father died." she replied with a slight shrug of her shoulders, choosing not to elaborate any further.

"Good," he said simply, his hand stilling, "he should have died a long time ago."

Surprised by his declaration, she propped herself up on her elbows to look at him curiously. “Why do you say that?”

“I was never a fan of how he treated you.” he explained.

Beverly couldn’t contain a bark of bitter laughter at this proclamation. “Didn’t you want to *eat* me? Why would you care? Wouldn’t it have brought you some sort of sick joy to see me mistreated?”

He pulled back to look at her in a way that suggested he took substantial offense to her words. “Absolutely not.”

Pennywise paused for a moment with a contemplative look on his painted face, thinking of how to explain himself to her. For some reason he felt compelled to do so. “Do you eat meat?” he asked.

“Yeah. I mean, I’ve been trying to cut back recently, but yeah. I do.” she responded.

“Do you want the animals you eat to *suffer* before they make their way onto your plate?” Pennywise continued, already knowing the answer.

“NO!” she exclaimed.

“Exactly.” he stated with a tone of finality.

Beverly was entirely perplexed by his explanation. As she so clearly recalled, he didn’t just kill and eat children quickly, he reveled in causing them as much fear as possible leading up to and during the process.

“But you make the... *slaughtering*... process as terrifying as possible for your... *livestock*. I would *never* purchase meat from a butcher that did that.” she declared, mentally cringing at her participation in this weird conversation.

“It’s not a perfect analogy,” he admitted, “but the fear is necessary. It’s my primary form of sustenance. That doesn’t mean that I want the *livestock* to suffer its entire life leading up to mealtime.”

“Wait, wait, wait. The *fear* is your primary form of sustenance? Not the meat?” she asked, shocked by this bit of information.

“I need both, but I’d starve to death much sooner without the fear than I would without the meat.” he elaborated. “I think for a human it would be like food versus water. You need food, but you can go longer without it than you can go without water.”

Not sure how to process this new set of information, she allowed herself a moment of silent reflection. Did he actually possess some semblance of compassion, or was this some sort of elaborate trick? Thinking over the situation, she decided that he didn’t really have much of a reason to lie to her about all of this, and that his reaction to her father’s death really did seem genuine.

A glimmer of hope burst through her thoughts: if he managed to find it in himself to feel sorry for Beverly as a child, maybe she could capitalize on that. Sure, the fear was a necessary nutrient for him, but maybe she could use this newly discovered empathy to redirect him toward another form of meat. She just had to get him on board, which could prove to be a daunting task.

6. Contention

“Does it have to be children?” she asked, breaking the silence they’d fallen into. Noting his look of confusion, she expanded on her question. “I mean, are you able to, you know... *prey*... on adults?”

“I’ve been planning to eat *you*. The whole time I was asleep, I’d been dreaming of the day I’d see you again. I kind of figured you’d be an adult by that time. I thought you’d be even older, actually, but *someone* had to wake me up early.” he joked.

“Oh... oh. Right.” she replied, feeling dumb.

After a long pause, she continued her line of thought. “Well, why children then? If adults also work?”

“Children are... preferred.” he stated tersely, not really wanting to discuss the topic any further

“But clearly not required, right?” she asked in an optimistic tone of voice that stoked his growing frustration with where he could see this conversation heading.

“What’s your point?” he snarled, trying but failing to keep his exasperation from seeping out. “Come out and say whatever you want to say.”

“I don’t like that you eat children, and I think you should stop.” obliging in a rushed tone, words nearly running together.

He sat up quickly, growling and running his hands over his white face in frustration. “Let me get this straight, *Bevvie*...” he snapped, “you come here, wake me up, seduce me, and then ask me to change who I am for you all in the span of an hour? Have you always been this arrogant?”

Beverly huffed in outrage at his reaction. “What am I even doing, trying to reason with a monster?” she exclaimed, more to herself than to him, as she began to track down her clothing.

As she began to move toward the foot of the bed, his hand gently grasped her wrist, willing her to pause and look back toward him. He looked... sad. Hurt.

“The fact that I’m not human doesn’t automatically make me a *monster*, you know.” he said softly, not meeting her gaze but instead staring at the delicate wrist in his hand.

Beverly didn’t know what to say. Part of her felt guilty for using a term that clearly upset him. But a larger part still felt anger and disgust over the behaviors that made her label him this way in the first place.

How could she forget everything he put her through 15 years prior? The blood in the bathroom, the kidnapping (surely with the intent to eat her alive), everything he’d done to her friends... how could she put that out of her mind?

“Oh my god... and I fucked him, after all of that. I fucked IT. I fucked a monster... or whatever it is.” she thought to herself in a panic, staring at the wooden wall in front of her. *“And it was the best sex of my entire life, no less. How fucked up am I?”*

His sadness grew with her changing scent. Worry, self-loathing, and an overpowering top-note of panic assaulted his nose. He slowly released her wrist, letting his hand hover awkwardly in the space between them.

“You can go if you want. I won’t stop you.” he mumbled.

It honestly bothered him that he was so bothered by her words, but for the first time in his billions of years in this particular universe, he had felt a real connection to another being today. As soon as he really looked into Beverly’s hesitant blue eyes, he wanted to make her feel good. He wanted to take someone’s pain away for once, instead of causing it.

And though he’d engaged in sexual intercourse with a human once before, a few wake cycles ago in a simple attempt to satisfy his curiosity after watching men filter out of the town brothel looking happy and relaxed, he never felt the kind of deep, spiritual

connection with anyone or anything else until Beverly walked into his sewers today. "*Making love*," he remembered hearing a couple call it once upon a time... was that what he and Beverly just did? Calling it "sex" felt insufficient.

Unbeknownst to him, Beverly had been nervously watching the melange of emotions flit across his painted face as he lost himself in this train of thought, still gazing down at her hand. She still hadn't made an attempt to dress herself and get the hell out of there, though she knew she really should.

Pennywise slowly looked up at Bev's face and found her watching him intently, unease rolling off her body in waves. That overwhelming urge to take her pain away returned, hitting him like a ton of bricks, and he abandoned all thought to quickly lean forward and capture her lips with his again. The startling action caused Beverly to flinch, but she soon found herself returning the kiss, hands moving up to weave into his orange hair.

He grabbed her around the waist and pulled her onto his lap. Straddling him, she pressed her naked chest against his and let out a quiet gasp at the welcome warmth of their restored skin-to-skin contact. Kissing his way down her neck, he tentatively nipped at her shoulder with a mouthful of teeth still sharp from their argument, not hard enough to draw blood, but apparently hard enough to draw an audible moan from deep inside Beverly's chest. Pennywise was pleasantly surprised at the lack of fear present in her intoxicating cocktail of scents, and took it as permission to continue exploring her neck and upper chest with his teeth.

"You're so beautiful," he mumbled between bites. "So delicious."

She moaned needily, tugging on his hair to pull his head back up to hers so that she could assault his mouth in a rough, needy kiss. When she pulled his lower lip into her mouth with her teeth, Pennywise let out a loud, inhuman growl that further spurred her on. She was going to fuck this *monster* again. And this time it was going to be rough and dirty.

7. Threats

“*Fuck* me, Penn” she begged, breaking the kiss. “And don’t hold back.”

“Gladly.” he snarled, flipping her onto her back and openly displaying a mouth filled with sharp teeth as his red-rimmed irises bore down on her.

Bev barely had time to consider whether her request was a bad idea before he plunged his entire length into her.

His eyes fluttered closed at the amazing feeling of having her wrapped around him once again. When he reopened them, no yellow remained. They were as red as his lips, staring straight into her soul.

Pennywise smelled a strong undercurrent of fear bubbling up, but also noticed that the scent of arousal had intensified even further, which he took as a sign to continue down this current trajectory. After all, she had told him not to hold back. Who was he to deny her request?

He snarled down at her and his bare hand came up to wrap around her throat as he slammed into her relentlessly, drool running down his sharp teeth to drop onto her chest.

“This is what happens to bad girls who just can’t seem to stay away,” growled Pennywise, tightening his grip slightly.

He let out a terrifying laugh as he stared down at her, the eerie clown voice returning. “What the fuck were you thinking coming down here alone, Beverly Marsh? Did you *honestly* think I’d let you get away after everything you put me through? That I’d let you walk out of here after you stabbed me *twice*, tried to kill me, and then had the nerve to wake me up? Poor, poor, *foolish* little girl.”

Her eyes widened in fear, but she was still more turned on than she’d ever been in her life. She tilted her hips upward to meet his thrusts. He laughed sadistically and smirked down at her, the hand not choking her moving down to allow his thumb to slowly circle her clit,

the gentleness a comforting contrast from his otherwise aggressive approach.

“You may have escaped me before, *little Bevvie*, but make no mistake. I won’t let that happen again. You’ll pay the consequences for your actions. You belong to *me* now, Beverly. You’re *mine*.”

Bev simultaneously gasped in fear and moaned in pleasure, the combined sound released from her constricted throat as a shuddering, desperate panting noise. Meeting his eyes directly for the first time in several minutes, Bev was met with such supernatural intensity that she felt hypnotized, the glowing red orbs imploring her not to look away.

“Do you like it when I use you like this, my depraved little human?” he asked, thrusts slowing, thumb still pressing lightly on her swollen bud.

Beverly nodded enthusiastically.

“Then beg.” he ordered, stopping his motions altogether. “Beg me to fuck you.”

“Penn, please! Oh god, please! Please fuck me!” she panted out.

“Good girl.” Pennywise growled, slamming all the way into her while grinning cruelly, sharp teeth reflecting the filtered light of the setting sun. “It’s a good thing you seem to be enjoying this, because I’m going to use you like this EVERY. SINGLE. DAY.” he snarled, punctuating each threatening word with a brutal thrust of his hips, “until the day I’ve finally had my fill and grown bored of your *tight, hot, wet* little human cunt. At which point...” he paused, bringing his mouth down beside her ear to growl “you’re going to make a *verrrrry* tasty meal.”

She came hard, walls clenching around him as she clamped down on his shoulder with her teeth, muffling a loud scream. She pulsed around him, coaxing his own orgasm. He ripped her mouth away from his shoulder to meet his own lips, kissing her deeply as they both rode out the ripples of their intense pleasure together, shaking and clinging to each other’s bodies. Coming down, the kiss slowed.

He moved his head back and forth to place soft kisses all over her face, from the corners of her mouth to the tip of her nose, and finally up to her temple as he rested his head down beside her ear again.

She tapped his shoulder after a couple minutes to signal him to move off, unable to sustain the weight of his massive body much longer. He rolled onto his side and turned her so that he could pull her back up against his chest, arms wrapping around her tightly. He placed a gentle kiss to the side of her neck and nuzzled into the hair at the nape of her neck as she fell asleep once again, warm and satiated, drowsily taking notice of how nicely their bodies fit together in this spooning position.

8. Morning Light

Beverly awoke several hours later as a beam of morning light moved its way across her face. In her thoroughly exhausted state, she felt disoriented. *"Where the fuck am I?"* she thought to herself. *"Whose arm is on me?"*

Looking down, she saw pallid white flesh leading to darkened, sharp-clawed fingers. *"Weird. That looks like..."* It all flooded back to her. She suddenly remembered the last thing he'd said to her before they fell asleep: his promise to hold her hostage until the day he decided to eat her.

"Oh fuck! Fuck, fuck, fuck!" she mouthed silently, eyes darting around looking for her clothing. Her attempts to wriggle out of his grasp awoke him from his light slumber, and he loosened his grip to allow her to sit up. Shifting to rest his back against the pillows, he crossed both arms behind his head and smiled smugly at her.

"Leaving so soon, Beverly?" he asked, a mischievous tone in his voice.

"I... uhh... I..." she stammered, eyes darting to and from the door of the wooden circus cart, the scent of fear cascading off her naked body.

He felt a twinge of guilt at her reaction, and reached over to hand her the bra that had managed to become buried within the various layers of blankets over the course of their evening. A metaphorical olive branch.

This confused Beverly greatly, as she was under the impression that there was no way he would allow her to leave his lair alive. He had made that much very clear last night. So why was he allowing her to dress? Trying to work it all out, she put on her bra faster than ever before in spite of her shaking hands.

Seeking to break the tense mood with a joke harkening back to their dialogue last night, he said impishly, "I don't often do this, you know... play with my food. Not in this particular way, at least."

Tears built up in her widened eyes as she looked around in a panic, opening and closing her mouth repeatedly, unable to form words. She began to hyperventilate, and he quickly burst up to crawl over to her, cupping the back of her head in his colossal hand to pull her face to his chest. That hand began to massage her scalp gently while the other moved up and down her bra-clad back in an effort to console her.

“Hey, hey, hey. Shh... Bev, I’m only kidding.” he whispered. “It was a bad joke. It was just a joke.”

She kneeled frozen on the bed, letting him hold her as she attempted to calm down. Her arms hung awkwardly at her sides while her cheek slid against his bare chest, now soaked with her panicked tears.

When she had finally calmed down from teetering on the edge of a panic attack, he spun her around gently to rest between his legs as he leaned back against the pillows. He began to lightly massage her shoulders and neck, hoping the act would soothe her.

Pennywise wanted nothing more than to break the awkward silence and change the subject so that Beverly could get back to feeling okay again. Deciding that another joke was likely a bad idea, he chose to engage her in conversation instead.

“So where are you staying? And how much longer will you be in Derry?” he asked softly, further quelling her concerns about being trapped here forever. It seemed that little diatribe about not letting her get away this time was just for show, after all. A very convincing show. A very sexy show.

“Oh... umm...that little place up at 95 and Broadway? The Old Derry Inn, I think it’s called?” she replied nervously, still unsure of exactly how to proceed now that morning had arrived. “And, uhh... I don’t know, actually. I haven’t really planned out any specifics.”

“Don’t you have a job to get back to? Or a boyfriend or something?” he asked, attempting to casually drag information out of her.

“Ha! Yeah right. No, I’m embarrassingly single.” she laughed. Pennywise was thankful that she couldn’t see his face, as any efforts

to hide his grin at hearing this news were entirely unsuccessful.

“And no,” she continued, “I don’t have a job that I have to get back to. I mean, I do *have* a job. But I’m self-employed and I work from home, so I can really work anywhere. As long as there’s an internet connection, of course.”

“Self-employed, eh? What is it that you do?” he asked, intrigued. What had Beverly Marsh grown up to become?

“I’m a psychologist, actually. I got my doctorate a couple years ago, and now I counsel teens who have undergone trauma... *ironically enough*.” she said, twisting her head around and raising an accusatory eyebrow at him. “But I do everything over the internet. I video chat with my patients, since they’re all over the country. I also write books about adolescent psychology, give talks at conferences, those kinds of things. None of that really requires being tied to a specific location, which is great. I’ve been able to move around quite a bit.”

“And where are you living now, *Dr. Marsh*?” he asked, his flirty emphasis on her title causing a blush to cover her cheeks. She also found herself thankful that he couldn’t see her face.

“Southern California. Santa Monica. Right near the beach. It’s nothing like Derry, that’s for sure.” she told him wistfully.

Fascinated, he sat up straighter and cocked his head over her shoulder to look at the side of her face intently. “What’s it like?” he asked. Noting her look of amusement at his changing demeanor, Pennywise clarified, “I’ve never been outside of Derry. Not on this planet, at least. I don’t really know what it’s like anywhere else.”

“Oh...” she said, feeling a twinge of sympathy at hearing that. For her, exploring new places was one of the greatest ways you could spend your life. “Well... hmm, where should I start? It’s warm, for one. There aren’t really seasons. You know how Derry gets lots of snow in Winter? Well, where I live it just gets slightly cooler outside, but it’s still pretty warm. February in Santa Monica feels like May in Derry.”

She felt like she was rambling, but Pennywise seemed to be hanging

on every word, so she continued on.

“And... the scenery is completely different. There are these tall, skinny, kind of funny looking trees everywhere called palms. And there’s a big, sandy beach... actually, the beach has an amusement park on it, which is kind of like a circus, but it’s a permanent fixture.” she explained.

He seemed particularly intrigued by her description, so she continued on. “There’s a ferris wheel and lots of rides and games. And in the distance there are big, tall mountains. And there are millions of people who live in the surrounding area, so yeah... it’s really different from Derry.” she said, trailing off.

“Is that why you chose it?” he asked.

“Maybe a bit. I mostly chose it because I want to see and experience as many new things as possible. But I’d be lying if I said I didn’t want to get as far as possible from Derry. From my dad, you know.” she said, mood dampening slightly.

“And me.” he added quietly, looking at her with a somber expression.

“And you.” she admitted. “All of it, really. The only thing Derry ever really brought me was pain. How come you’ve never left?”

“Can’t. Trapped here.” he said with a shrug. “It’s probably for the best, though. Imagine the path of destruction I’d leave all over the world.”

“You don’t have to, you know. Leave a path of destruction.” she said cautiously, vividly remembering his unwillingness to have this conversation last night.

“I have to eat, Bev.” he stated firmly, but without as much anger as before.

“I know. I know! But what if you were more selective? Or *differently* selective?” she asked, quickly turning around to face him.

“*Meaning?*” he pressed, a bit of frustration seeping into his tone.

“Meaning, there are a lot of really bad people out there, Penn. I know that better than anyone. Hell, I was raised by one. And I see children every day who have been hurt by these horrible people. People who don’t *deserve* to live. People who probably deserve a painful, terrifying death. What if you shifted your focus onto that type of... *prey?*”

Notes for the Chapter:

I obviously ended up going pretty off-script with Bev's career choice, so this is definitely AU. I just love the idea of Bev growing up having led this terribly traumatic life, then turning that into helping others who have experienced trauma.

9. Activities

Pennywise sat for a moment, silently contemplating Beverly's words. She did have a point about some people being more deserving of death than others. And he had to admit that as much as he disliked children, logic would dictate that they probably hadn't been alive long enough to cause real damage the way many adults had. But there were some definite drawbacks to the plan.

First, grown adults were a lot larger, faster, and harder to hunt than children, and once captured didn't give off as much fear... especially criminals. They'd been too used to being in scary situations to become truly terrified without a ton of very exhausting work on Pennywise's part. Essentially, he'd be spending more of his own energy to hunt prey that provided less energy to replenish his stores.

Even if he were to ignore all of that, there were a lot more children in Derry than there were criminals. At least criminals who Bev would consider deserving of a painful, terror-filled death.

"I have to think it over," he told her simply, looking up to meet her eyes for the first time in several minutes.

"Oh." she replied, unsurprised but disappointed all the same. She looked down at her crossed legs and began to fiddle with a blanket corner that had made its way between them.

"Bev," he continued, "it's not an outright 'no'. But the logistics of your plan are iffy. If I were to truly consider this, I'd need certain assurances."

She nodded her understanding and opened her mouth to speak when she heard a beeping noise coming from somewhere in the general vicinity of her left foot. Pulling the offending object out from the sea of blankets, she saw that it was her watch.

"I have to get back." she said, looking down at the display before quickly scrambling for her clothing. "I have an appointment in an hour."

“Can I see you later?” he asked, and she let out an awkward laugh at the absurdity of the situation. Pennywise the fucking evil, child-eating demon clown was asking to see her later as though it were a request for a date.

“I’m sure you’ll find a way, regardless of what I say.” she scoffed.

“Is that your way of asking me not to?” he asked, slightly dejected.

She knew she should take him up on what seemed like an offer to leave her alone, but the words died in her throat.

“Not necessarily. Umm... I’m a bit too exhausted for any more... *activities*... today, though” she said, instead.

“Understood. We don’t have to do any *activities*.”

“Wh-What did you have in mind, then?” she asked, looking up from her shirt buttons, confused by his response. What could he possibly want with her, if not sex? Was he actually interested in just spending time with her? That seemed... unlikely.

“I don’t know, watch a movie? Take a walk? I could help you with the funeral stuff, if you need it...” he finished awkwardly.

“Okay, I guess he is just interested in spending time with me. This is so fucking weird.” she thought. Even weirder was the fact that she thought it sounded kind of okay to her, too. Especially with his offer to help out. God knows she wasn’t having an easy time being the sole planner, especially with how fraught the relationship had been between Beverly and her father.

“I can’t believe I’m saying this, but yeah. I kind of *do* need help, now that you mention it. I’m really the only one around to do everything. My father didn’t have many friends.” she explained, sounding thoroughly overwhelmed.

“Big surprise there.” he scoffed under his breath. “I’ll swing by around sunset.”

“That works.” she said, pulling the key out of her jean pocket to look for the room number. “Room 27.” she told him, flipping the keychain

around to show him the ornate number inscription.

He leaned forward to press a quick, gentle kiss to her lips. “See you later, little human” he whispered.

“See you later... *monster*” she replied, bravely testing the waters. Her words were met with a knowing quirk of his glossy red lips, which she briefly returned before turning and making her way back toward the sewer exit.

Beverly quickly navigated the maze of pipes, still half-expecting him to grab her from behind and tell her she couldn’t leave. Based on what she knew about him and his twisted sense of humor, she wouldn’t necessarily put it past him.

Following the light, she came to an outlet on a rocky bank of the river. She quickly realized that wasn’t the one she entered through yesterday, but it served the same purpose nonetheless. Looking around for anything that would clue her in to where was currently standing, she noticed a road on a raised embankment behind her.

Scrambling up the steep hill, she arrived on the shoulder of the road and took a moment to dust herself off before beginning to walk in the direction she assumed to be Derry, based on the flow of the river. After about a mile, she began to see signs of civilization, and she beamed over her own ‘survival instincts’.

By the time she reached her hotel room, she realized she only had 8 minutes to get herself cleaned up before her appointment. Frantically stripping herself of her dirty clothing, she hopped in the shower and scrubbed down in record time, reflecting on the strange 24 hours she’d had. Once clean, she hopped out and glanced at the clock, realizing she didn’t have time for makeup. However, a glance in the mirror revealed several bruises in the shape of teeth peppering her neck and collarbone.

She quickly dabbed concealer on the areas, tossed on a sweater, and booted up her computer, ready to behave as though she didn’t just have mindblowing sex with a nonhuman entity that had terrorized her as a child.

10. Comfort

By the time 6:00 rolled around and Beverly was finished submitting insurance paperwork, she couldn't wait to hop back in the shower. In her rush earlier, she didn't have enough time to get squeaky-clean, and throughout the day she could smell the remnants of that awful greywater wafting off her skin.

If she was estimating correctly, she had about an hour before sunset. Plenty of time to really scrub down. She took her time in the shower, washing her hair twice and giving her legs a fresh shave to ensure that none of the smell remained attached to the tiny hairs there. When she felt sufficiently confident that she had removed the scent entirely, she stepped out into the steam-filled bathroom and tossed on a fuzzy pink robe, wrapping her hair up in a towel.

A soft knock sounded on the door. Figuring it was the housekeeper dropping off more toilet paper or fresh linens, she trotted over to open it, finding herself instead staring at the red pom-pom adorned torso of a 7 foot clown. In her surprise, she shrieked and jumped back, clutching the pink fabric at her chest.

"What are you doing here?" she panted, putting herself back together.

"... It's sunset." he stated quietly, feeling extremely awkward in this moment.

She looked around his body to catch a glimpse of the sky, now beautifully decorated in shades of pink and purple.

"Do you want me to go?" he asked, shifting his weight from foot to foot. "I can come back later, if you'd like."

"No, no, that's okay." she said, stepping aside to welcome him in. "Let me just throw on some clothes."

Pennywise stood perfectly still in the entranceway, not wanting to touch anything without her permission. After a moment, he heard her speaking to him from the bathroom.

“The sun sets so much earlier now than it did even a couple of days ago. It always throws me through a loop this time of the year.” she explained, throwing on a pair of yoga pants and a long-sleeved t-shirt.

Glancing in the mirror, she briefly wondered whether she should apply some light makeup. Deciding that it wasn't worth the effort just to spend an evening in with a clown who lived in the sewer, she settled on simply running a comb through her auburn locks.

Beverly opened the bathroom door to find Pennywise sitting on the couch, with his hands on his lap, and she chuckled at the sight. For such an enormous being, he looked so small and insecure in this moment.

She walked over to the mini-bar and grabbed two bottles of beer, twisting the tops off and handing one to him. “I don't know if you drink -- or if you even *can* drink -- but it's what polite hosts do.” she explained when he looked at the bottle questioningly.

She sat down beside him on the couch and watched him take a tentative sip of the beer, his face lighting up as he realized he quite enjoyed the taste. Hopefully it wouldn't make him sick later. He allowed himself to relax a bit, leaning back into the cushions of the couch and propping one foot up on the opposite knee.

They sipped their beers in silence for a few minutes, both staring straight ahead at a blank TV screen.

“Pennywise isn't your real name, is it?” she suddenly asked.

He turned to look at her in surprise. “No. It's not. I uhh... I don't really have a name. There's only one of me, so I'm just... me.”

“Oh. Well, what should I call you?” Beverly continued.

“Whatever you like, I suppose.” he said with a nonchalant shrug. “How did you refer to me before?”

“Oh, I don't think you want me to call you those things.” she laughed.

“Is that right?” he asked, intrigued by her reaction. “Humor me. What did you call me?”

“Mostly ‘IT’ or ‘that thing’. Stuff like that.” she said quietly, not meeting his eyes.

Admittedly, those words did sting. “Ah. Yeah, maybe not.” he said gently, pausing for a moment before adding, “I liked it when you called me ‘Penn’, though.”

“I called you ‘Penn’?” she asked, confused. “When was that?”

“Last night.” he smirked at her, tilting his chin down to look up at her flirtatiously through his black lashes.

She smiled shyly, feeling a fluttering in her chest. “Okay. ‘Penn’ it is.”

Grabbing the remote off the coffee table, she flipped the TV on and resumed drinking her beer, scooting over to nestle her body under the arm he’d thrown over the back of the couch. He smiled down at the top of her head contentedly, feeling a growing warmth in his chest as he watched her giggle at the sitcom on the screen.

11. Decisions

When her bottle was empty and the rerun episode had come to a close, Beverly begrudgingly decided it was time to get to work. She had so many loose ends to tie up before she could leave Derry and resume her perfectly normal life back in sunny California.

She hopped up quickly and began buzzing around the room, surprising Pennywise, who had become quite comfortable on the couch. Leaning forward to place his own beer bottle on the coffee table, he stood up and watched her flitting about for a moment before asking, "What can I help with?"

"Oh, umm... I don't know. What *can* you help with? Can you..." she paused for a moment, trying to think of a polite way to put this. "Can you, uhh, read and write?" she asked swiftly, words running together.

"Beverly Marsh," he mock-scoldded her, "you wound me. *Of course* I can read and write."

"Oh, thank god!" she exclaimed, laughing at the exchange. "That's going to make things so much easier!"

He gracefully stepped through the narrow hotel kitchenette before pausing to point at a stack of pamphlets on the dining table. "Are these for the funeral?"

Bev nodded. "There are so many decisions to make. Burial or cremation? If I choose to bury him, which casket? Which cemetery?" she paused for a moment, beginning to become emotional in her overwhelmed state. "I don't know what he would have wanted. I don't... I didn't know him, really."

Pennywise bit his tongue to keep himself from telling her that yes, she *did* know him. That he was exactly the man she thought he was. Because otherwise he wouldn't have done the things he did to her. He knew that she wouldn't take well to hearing that, though, so he settled on simply saying, "I'm here to help. Just tell me what you need."

"I think more than anything, I just need someone to talk through all this stuff with. I think that might help me make some decisions. For instance... what would you want? Would you want to be buried or cremated?"

To Pennywise, neither of those sounded like good options. Burned to ash, or stuck in a box in the ground for eternity? Though he didn't like to think of it at all, he decided he'd prefer to simply dissolve into space dust and rejoin his original place in the universe.

"Cremated." he said.

She let out a shaky, relieved laugh and threw her hands up in the air. "Well, that settles that, then! Cremation it is!" not wanting to spend any more time mulling it over.

"Can you go through and toss all of the pamphlets for caskets, cemeteries, and anything else related to burials?" she asked him excitedly, the rush of having made a decision immediately lifting her spirits. Walking back over to the sofa, she sat back down and began to sort through billing documents for her father's brief stint in the hospital.

He got to work immediately, not just tossing all burial-related information, but also organizing the remaining pamphlets into categories: cremation information, memorial services, catering and decor, and some cards of condolence that had made their way to her hotel mailbox along with all of the funeral providers trying to make a buck off the death of Alvin Marsh.

He felt proud of himself when he finished, and hopped up from the dining chair with a wide smile on his face. Turning his eyes toward the couch, he saw that Beverly was not in a similar state of mind. She was crouched over, rubbing her temples, making small noises of frustration every few seconds as she skimmed what looked to be a particularly long bill.

He quietly made his way over to her and sat down next to her. "Let's take a break." he suggested, taking both of her hands in his and willing her to look up from the papers scattered in front of her. "What would make you feel better right now?"

Another question she'd never been asked before, and to which she didn't have a good answer. As she sat there silently trying to come up with a response, her stomach jumped in for her, growling loudly. She blushed at the unbecoming noise, explaining to him that she hadn't had a chance to eat since scarfing down a protein bar at 10am between appointments.

"I'll just order a pizza. They can deliver it straight to the room and we can eat..." she looked at the coffee table and dining table, both covered in painstakingly organized piles of paper. "Well... I guess we'll have to eat on the bed."

He didn't correct her use of the term 'we', though he knew he likely wouldn't be eating the pizza himself. Instead, he chose to stay silent for the sake of not providing a reminder that he relied on a different type of food. As she walked over to the fridge to dial the number listed on the pizza-shaped magnet, he mused to himself that he probably *would* try a bite of the pizza, as a matter of fact. After all, it had been over an hour since he drank a bottle of beer, and he was experiencing no ill effects.

"30 to 45 minutes!" she said, interrupting his train of thought. "I don't really feel like getting back to all of this stuff in the meantime, though. Do you want another beer?"

"Sure, why not?" he replied, walking up behind her as she removed the bottle-caps. Years of hunting had gotten him in the habit of moving silently, so she didn't expect him to be standing there when she turned around. She bumped into him nose-first, and she stepped back slightly to lightly rub at the sore tip as she looked up at him, feeling incredibly miniscule next to his massive form.

"You're really tall." she said softly, handing him the bottle. He gently took it from her, and set it on the counter beside him. Lifting both hands to cup the sides of her face, he crouched down to place a slow, affectionate kiss on her lips for the first time that evening.

"I've been holding that in all night." he whispered, his lips grazing hers. Pulling away after a moment, he simply smiled and took her hand, leading her over to the sofa where they could relax and sip their beers.

12. Acknowledgement

Thirty minutes passed in what seemed like seconds as Beverly and Pennywise sat on the couch sipping their beers. He had begun to ask her more questions about California, so she took the opportunity to pull out her phone and show him the many photos and videos she'd taken over the past year of living there.

Pennywise turned his body so that his back rested against the arm of the couch and motioned for her to sit between his legs, back against his chest. "This way we can both see the pictures," he explained. She flashed him a skeptical smirk, but complied nonetheless.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she asked him, pulling up an album from a particularly nice sunset on the beach. He nodded. It really was, but all he could focus on was the woman in the photos, red hair blowing wildly in the wind. *She* was beautiful. "I can't wait to get back. Feel the sand on my feet, the sun on my skin. Smell the salty air. I wish photos could show you the whole experience, not just the visuals."

Pennywise felt a sinking feeling in his chest at her words, and a large lump made its way into his throat. Just as he was about to open his mouth to beg her not to go -- to stay here in Derry with him, instead -- he heard a loud knock on the door.

"Oh, the pizza! Man, that was fast!" Bev exclaimed happily, jumping up to run to the door with wallet in hand. Pennywise willed himself to pull it together while she made polite smalltalk and paid an awkward, pubescent-voiced delivery boy hidden from his view by a jutting wall segment.

"Babe, can you grab some plates and napkins?" she called to Pennywise over her shoulder. He froze. "*Babe?*"

Closing the door, she turned to look at him, blushing apologetically. "Sorry about that. I didn't want him to think I was here alone. He seemed a bit too interested, if you know what I mean. So I had to make him think I was here with my husband or something. Just to be safe."

He nodded curtly and spun around toward the kitchenette, his emotional rollercoaster seeming intent on continuing down its trajectory. "Plates and napkins are where?" he asked, his head sticking out from behind an open cabinet door.

"Bottom left" she replied, setting some towels down on the bed to prevent any pizza stains from making their way onto the comforter. "Can you grab a bottle of wine from the fridge, too?"

He made his way to the bed, arms full, and began to sit down before she realized she forgot to ask him to bring wine glasses. Deciding against asking him to make another trip, she resolved to simply drink straight from the bottle. It would mean fewer dishes to do later, anyway.

He watched her open the box and grab a large, floppy slice of pizza, bringing it to her mouth and taking a tiny bite to test its temperature. Upon deciding that it wasn't too hot, all grace went out the window, replaced by a ravenous eating method that honestly reminded him of his own techniques. Different medium, same artform. He struggled to stifle a laugh, and she looked up at him, stopping the motions of her mouth mid-chew.

"Whaa?" she asked, mouth full. Pennywise put both hands up in front of him as if to say "*Nothing. Continue.*"

She noticed he wasn't eating and wondered if it was because he couldn't or because he didn't want to take any of her pizza without it being offered to him. "Do you want some?" she asked, holding the slice out toward him.

"Might as well," he said with a shrug, leaning forward over the box to take a bite, never breaking eye contact with her. She swallowed loudly, this time because of her body's heated reaction to the sight. She'd never seen someone eat pizza so... *sensually*.

He pulled back after taking his bite and smiled at her. He had to admit, pizza was pretty great. Not substantial enough to fulfill his needs, but definitely enjoyable for the simple experience of snacking on something.

She cleared her throat and took a large swig of wine out of the bottle before giving him a long, serious look. He responded with a questioning facial expression, and she simply said “This is weird.”

“The wine?” he asked satirically, knowing full-well she wasn’t referring to her choice in alcoholic beverages.

“No, *this*. All of this. Sitting on a bed in a hotel room in Derry, Maine, eating pizza with *you*. *YOU*. This is insanely weird.” Beverly continued.

“Yeah, I know...” he said, taking a long pause and another bite of pizza. “the pizza is pretty good, though. Even if you are hogging all the wine.”

She laughed heartily at that, her entire torso bending in on itself as she clutched her stomach. When her laughter devolved into snorting, Pennywise’s face lit up in amusement and he felt a rush of energy surge through his veins. He’d overheard some junkies down by the river discussing the feeling of shooting heroin once, and he absently wondered if this was what it felt like. If so, he finally understood why drugs were so addictive.

When she had finally caught her breath, they resumed devouring the pizza together, this time with Bev sharing the bottle of wine. After the pizza had disappeared and the wine bottle ran dry, she began to clean up, bringing everything into the small kitchenette.

Stealing a glance at the clock on the oven, she realized it was already 11:00, and she had an early morning appointment.

Catching Beverly staring at the clock, Pennywise took this as his cue to recuse himself and let her get a good night’s sleep. Especially considering he kept her from getting a full 8 hours last night.

Coming up behind her to wrap his arms around her waist, he pressed a kiss to the top of her shoulder and whispered, “I should go.”

She turned around in his arms and wrapped her own around his ruffle-covered neck, kissing him sweetly. “Same time tomorrow?” she asked, pulling away to look him in his golden eyes. He smiled widely

at this, and nodded, pressing a kiss to her forehead before making his way back to the door.

“Sweet dreams, little human.” he said softly, closing the door behind him.

13. Apprehension

Beverly woke up bright-and-early at 5:30 the next morning, feeling absolutely horrendous. Two beers and more than half a bottle of wine had thrown her into a hangover the likes of which she never began experiencing until the past couple years. Aging was a real bitch.

Dragging herself out of bed, she plugged in a set of hot rollers before making herself a hefty pot of coffee, which she downed in record time since she knew she'd have to put extra effort into covering the dark circles under her eyes before her first video call.

Popping the rollers in her hair and covering them with a floral showercap that couldn't *not* remind her of young Stanley Uris, she hopped in the shower. She allowed her thoughts to wander to Stan and the other Losers as she scrubbed down. They were all adults now, which was an odd thing to think about. She wondered what each of them was doing right this moment. Taking a shower before work like her? Sleepily snuggling up to a partner in bed? On a plane to somewhere exotic?

What were the Losers doing with their lives in general? Suddenly, Beverly felt like she had been punched in the gut. What was *she* doing with her life? Sleeping with IT? Having a romantic evening in, eating pizza and sipping wine with IT?

"What the fuck have you been *thinking?!* " she asked herself out loud. Turning off the tap and stepping out of the shower, she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror, lovebites still on full display.

"And you asked him... *IT ... to come back* tonight?! You are such an idiot! Why do you do this shit to yourself?! Are you suicidal?! Are you trying to get yourself killed?! He's not even human, for fuck's sake! You have no idea what he'll do. This could all be an elaborate game to him -- *make the prey let her guard down before striking!*" she scolded her reflection, becoming more and more irritated as she clumsily slapped concealer over her bruised neck and dark undereye circles.

Tossing on a sweater and a pair of comfortable slacks, she stormed

over to the dining table and flipped open her laptop, ready for a long, frustrating workday.

When she glanced at the clock next, it was already 4:30, and Beverly couldn't decide whether she was thankful that the day hadn't dragged on or resentful that it had flown by so quickly, leaving her with only two hours before his... its... arrival.

What she *did* know was that she was exhausted and would definitely need a nap if she had any chance of making it through the rest of the day. Her head still ached from last night, and as her hangover had progressed she had begun to experience a slight but annoying nausea. Sleep was the only thing she knew would help, aside from the Gatorade she'd been chugging all day.

Replacing her work attire with a red plaid pajama set, she turned off the lights, turned down the heat, and laid down. She was instantly out, and a knock sounded on the door in what felt like only seconds. Beverly stared at the ceiling for a few moments, unmoving. When she heard a second, louder knock, she reluctantly dragged herself out of bed for the second time that day, making her way to the door.

She opened it slowly, refusing to meet his eyes.

"Hey." she said lowly.

"... Hey." he responded, taking notice of her strange mood and attire. He dipped his head down to the level of hers, and she reluctantly met his questioning yellow gaze with her own guarded blue eyes. "I uhh... I brought you some things." he continued awkwardly, holding up a bag of assorted snack foods.

"Thanks." she replied curtly, rubbing a hand over her face and stepping aside so he could enter. He was already here, and she didn't quite feel like telling him to leave. Not yet, at least. Plus, she was hungry and she thought she spotted a package of Cheez-Its in his bag.

"Are you okay?" he asked, a concerned look on his expressive face.

"Huh?" she asked from the kitchenette, where she had gone to grab yet another bottle of Gatorade from the fridge. "Oh, yeah. I just woke

up. And I feel kind of sick.”

She left it at that, not wanting to provide any additional information that he could possibly use against her. Gatorade in hand, Beverly walked over to the couch to sit down, sorting through the bag of goodies Pennywise had placed on the coffee table.

“Do you have a lot to do tonight?” he asked her after a few moments, watching her warily from the other side of the couch.

She nodded, a stressed look on her face.

“How can I help?” he asked quietly, desperately wanting to improve her mood. Her current demeanor was making Pennywise deeply uncomfortable.

Thinking it over for a minute, she finally said “I have a lot of bills to pay. You said you can write, correct? If I show you how to write a check and address an envelope, do you think you could sort through them and take care of that for me?”

He nodded, and she got up to grab a pen, her checkbook, and a stack of envelopes. Turning her attention to the stack of bills on the coffee table in front of them, she walked him through the process of finding the bill amount, writing a check, and addressing the envelope to the correct address.

“I will go through and sign the checks later on, so don’t seal the envelopes just yet.” she told him. He nodded his understanding, still wary of speaking too much, and got to work as she went over to the dining table and began to make arrangements for her father’s cremation, selecting the most affordable option from the pile of pamphlets Pennywise had organized last night.

After about 20 minutes, Pennywise had finished writing checks and addressing envelopes. He twisted his head around to see whether she was deep in the middle of a task and, deciding she wasn’t, gently informed her that the checks were ready to be signed.

“Here, switch me spots.” she replied, getting up from the dining table. “I don’t want to disturb how the papers are organized.”

He moved from his spot on the couch to allow her to sit down, and awkwardly went to sit in the dining chair, still warm from her body heat.

“Will you copy down all the phone numbers from the pamphlets in the pile on the left so I can throw them out?” she asked, not turning around to look at him.

“Of course.” he replied, picking up her pen and getting to work.

Beverly began to sign the checks in front of her, making small noises of frustration. Each time she’d come across a particularly large number, she’d mumble it out in disbelief. “\$4600... \$6850... this is insane.”

She put her pen down and rubbed at her temples, taking deep breaths to try to calm herself down. She couldn’t believe she was spending nearly \$20,000 of her hard-earned money on medical bills for that awful man.

She sat in silence for a moment, staring at the blank TV screen, reflecting on the situation in which she found herself.

“Do you remember the day you took me?” she asked suddenly, eyes still glued straight ahead. He paused before slowly putting the pen down and looking up at her from the dining table.

“Yes.” he said simply.

“My dad... in the bathroom...?” she continued.

“I remember.”

“Were you... did you... do you know what happened before that? What he was doing? Why I hit him?” she asked.

“Not... exactly.” he said, though he had a vague idea.

“He was... he was trying to rape me.” she blurted out, tears beginning to spill from her eyes. “I think he would have, too, if I

hadn't..." she trailed off.

"Bev..." he began consolingly, standing up to slowly walk toward her. He stopped when she turned around to put up a hand and shake her head at him, silently imploring him not to come any closer.

"I'm going to take a shower. I'll be back out in a few." Beverly said, walking into the bathroom. She left the door open a bit and began removing her clothing, a fact which caused Pennywise's chest to fill with a cozy warmth despite the otherwise somber tone of the evening.

14. Humanity

After a few minutes, Pennywise heard muffled singing from the bathroom. Curiosity got the better of him, and he opened the door wider to step inside and listen. Leaning against the vanity across from the shower, he watched her silhouetted form through the foggy glass door as she lathered shampoo into the roots of her hair, quietly humming her slow, sad tune.

As she began rinsing her hair, the song reached its emotional crescendo, and Pennywise was spellbound. He moved closer to the shower, pressing a hand against the glass as he watched her steam-obscured body sway rhythmically beneath the water. Frozen in place, he didn't even notice when Beverly's hand reached down to turn off the tap. She squeezed the water from her hair as she turned around to open the door and grab her towel, only to see an enormous clown pressed up against the glass, staring at her.

She shrieked loudly, the sound instantly snapping Pennywise out of his trance. "Jesus fucking Christ, Penn!" she yelled. "What the fuck are you doing?!"

He flailed backwards at her outburst. Arms outstretched, he attempted to grab onto the towel bar for support, but it was no match for his 200+ pound weight. He fell hard on his lower back, and looked up to find Beverly glaring down at him, arms crossed, clutching a threadbare white towel tight to her soaked body.

"Are you trying to give me a heart attack?! I'm pretty sure there are easier ways to kill me!" she screamed down at him.

"N-no! I... you... the song..." he stammered, sitting up on his knees to rub at his spine. "Ouch. That really hurt."

"Good!" spat Beverly, though she still extended an arm to help him up. He took it and rose up to a standing position, relying on her arm only for balance. Towering over her in the confined space, he dusted his costume off while she worked to bring her heart rate back down to normal.

“If you want to hop in the shower, the hot water will probably help the soreness.” she suggested, calming down now that she had been sufficiently convinced that his actions held no immediate malintent.

Pennywise stared at the open shower in confusion. “Wh... what do I do?” he asked, feeling incredibly stupid in this moment.

Beverly barked out a loud laugh, realizing that he’d never taken a shower before. “I keep forgetting you’re not a human.”

His mood dampened further as it occurred to him that he really shouldn’t be here right now, with someone like her. Beverly deserved a human, not... whatever he was. He was quickly brought back to reality by Beverly reaching up and around his neck, searching for a snap or some other mechanism with which she could remove his Elizabethan collar. He stared down at her questioningly, and it was her turn to blush. “You uhh... you have to take your clothes off first. To take a shower.”

“Oh. Okay.” he mumbled awkwardly, hands moving up to the front of the collar, shifting some fabric out of the way to reveal a ribbon. He untied it and the collar came cascading off, exposing his white neck. Beverly swallowed loudly, staring at his prominent Adam’s apple. Noticing her changing mood and the tiny but quickly growing base note of arousal, Pennywise’s own mood instantly improved. He took her hands in his and brought them up to the top button of his costume, silently urging her to undress him.

As Beverly took over, he allowed his hands to float lightly over her exposed shoulders, down her arms, and finally around her back to twine into the wet ends of her ginger hair. His gaze shifted to the dripping ribbon of hair in his hand, which he experimentally twirled around his silk-wrapped fingers before coming to the realization that the gloves would need to come off, too. Slowly, he brought a hand up to his mouth and, reestablishing eye contact with Beverly, gently bit the fabric at the tip of his middle finger, pulling the glove off with his teeth.

Beverly’s eyelids fluttered at the sensual sight, and she abandoned her work on his buttons to take his other hand in her own and bring it up to her mouth. Mirroring his actions, she bit the tip of a finger

lightly until the fabric caught between her teeth. Pennywise let out a shuddering breath as he slowly pulled his hand back to allow the glove to slip off. Beverly held it in her teeth for a moment, staring up at him hungrily before letting it drop to the ground and assaulting his mouth in a passionate kiss.

Between kisses, she quickly made work of removing the rest of his costume before letting her towel fall to the floor and pulling him backwards into the shower. Her hand flew out to the side, searching for the water lever. After a bit of fumbling, she found it and quickly flipped it to the side, drenching them in water that she was pleasantly surprised to find was still the perfect temperature from her shower just minutes ago.

Pennywise was momentarily stunned by the strange sensation, like a hot rainstorm, pulling back to look around in an attempt to figure this whole “shower” thing out. A glance back at Beverly stopped his motions entirely. She stood leaning against the grey tile wall, breathing heavily, wet hair plastered to the sides of her face, water droplets cascading down her bare breasts. Pennywise heard a primal growl escape his own throat at the vision in front of him, and watched her eyes flare at the sound.

While she clearly enjoyed the monster in him, he was still determined to show her a more human side tonight, so he focused on tamping it down for this round. Suddenly, an idea occurred to him. Grabbing a bar of soap off the shelf to his right, he worked up a lather in his hands before bringing them up to rub the suds all over his painted face.

After a moment, Pennywise dipped his head underneath the strong stream of water, and pulled back to reveal a very bare, very human face. As the bubbles cascaded down his body, they washed away the white paint there too. While it was a mere illusion, Pennywise had perfected the art of shapeshifting over the eons, and the display left Beverly speechless. Her eyes darted all over his new visage, taking in every feature.

Gone was his bulbous head and its starkly receding hairline, replaced by a thick mop of light brown hair with wet waves that fell gracefully onto a perfectly normal forehead. He took his long-fingered hands

and slicked his hair back, raising his head to look at her with piercing eyes the color of mint sea glass.

“Oh my god. Penn...” she whispered in wonder, fingers coming up to explore his sharp cheekbones and soft, full lips. She smiled in amazement upon noting that his facial features really were identical to the clown’s, aside from the difference in head size and overall coloration. He smiled down at her with a mouthful of perfectly straight, perfectly normal human teeth, and she swooned, temporarily forgetting all about the bad mood she’d been in since waking.

Notes for the Chapter:

Clearly I refuse to admit that whatever it was they showed of Pennywise's human form in 'IT: Chapter 2' is what he looks like out of makeup. He's Bill Skarsgard, dammit, and he's gorgeous.

15. Insecurity

“You like?” he quietly asked, a smirk playing on his smooth pink lips.

“Mmhmm...” she mumbled, feeling drunk at the sight of him. “Kiss me, Penn.”

He obliged, kissing her deeply. She mewled and grabbed his shoulders, spinning him around so that he was the one plastered against the tile wall. Pennywise smirked at her dominant mood, which only encouraged her further. She kissed her way down his neck to nibble at his collarbone before dropping to her knees, face now level with his hardening pink cock.

Looking up at him with wide blue eyes, she opened her mouth and took all of him inside. Having never felt this sensation before, Pennywise gasped as his hips bucked forward slightly. Looking down at Beverly, he saw she was fighting back a flirtatious smirk, or what would have been left of one were her lips not tightly wrapped around him. From the looks of it, she enjoyed being able to elicit such a reaction from him, so he focused on fighting the natural urge to hold back his twitches and gasps. Being able to stay perfectly still and perfectly silent had served him well over the ages, but Beverly had a way of making him want to unlearn everything he knew and start over fresh.

He wondered whether he could stay in this form forever. For her. Keeping this look together cost him a lot more energy, but the rush he felt when she laughed last night might mean he could break even. Would that be good enough for her? Him *looking* like a human?

Pennywise's thoughts were abruptly interrupted by Beverly looking up at him from below, wide blue eyes framed by wet, dark lashes. He was overcome by a powerful urge to worship her. This goddess, this... *human*.

Rather than pulling her up to his level, he dropped to his knees, grabbing her firmly by the shoulders and kissing her fiercely as lukewarm water cascaded over their forms. Pulling away to catch her breath when she felt herself becoming lightheaded, Beverly took a

moment to study his face once again. With his human features, it was so much easier to see every emotion Pennywise was feeling.

He was looking at her in a way she'd only ever dreamt someone would. He opened his mouth to say something to her. She couldn't let him. She knew she wasn't ready for whatever was about to come out. Pulling his head down to hers, she shut him up before he had a chance to vocalize anything past the words "I think".

They kissed on the floor of the shower for God-knows how long until Pennywise noticed that Beverly was shivering in his arms. Pulling back to look her over, he noticed her lips had begun to turn purple. She looked up at the showerhead and he suddenly understood. Turning the tap off and picking Beverly up in his arms, he carried her to the bed, grabbing the entire stack of towels from the vanity on the way out of the bathroom.

Beverly chuckled as he wrapped her entire body in five large, white bath towels, making her look like a child's cheap attempt at a mummy costume for Halloween. Sitting down on the bed, legs crossed, he pulled her tightly-wrapped form onto his lap, rapidly rubbing his warm, human hands over the accessible parts of her body in an attempt to warm her faster.

She looked up at him, watching the emotions play on his face as he checked her over. She felt plenty warm now, but didn't want to break the spell just yet, so she let him continue. "*God, he's beautiful.*" she thought, looking up at his large, soulful eyes which were currently focused on inspecting the temperature of her fingertips.

Beverly's train of thought was suddenly derailed by a spike of anxiety at still not understanding his motivations for acting this way around her. She still hadn't managed to shake the mild dread she woke with that morning.

"Why are you doing this?" she asked quietly.

His eyes shot to hers and his brows furrowed in confusion as he tried to work out what she could possibly be referring to before giving up and replying "Why am I doing what? Looking at your fingers?"

"This. All of this, Penn. Why are you here right now? Why do you keep coming back? Why haven't you killed me? I can't make sense of it, and it's really... eating away at me."

He felt a chill move through his body as he thought of killing her, but she posed an interesting question: why?

"I don't know." he told her honestly, the words coming out slowly and timidly. "This is new to me."

He wished he could provide a more satisfying answer for her, but in the absence of that he sought to at least provide some comfort. He squeezed her body tighter to his, mindlessly combing his fingers through her wet hair as he continued to ponder her question.

If he was being completely honest with himself, he realized that he had always admired and respected Beverly Marsh in some strange way, though his feelings had certainly expanded over time. Thinking back to when he first met her, fondly remembering her defiance and lack of fear toward him, he smiled affectionately.

"You're the bravest person I've ever met." he whispered, pressing a kiss to the top of her head and taking a moment to enjoy the fresh, clean scent he found there. She didn't respond, but after a moment he felt her gently shaking in his arms and realized that his chest had become damp. She was crying. He made her cry. This was... unintended.

Shaking her head, Beverly mumbled something into his chest.

"I... can't hear you." he said awkwardly, and she pulled back to look up at him. Her eyes were red and swollen, her nose was running, and her skin looked flushed and blotchy. To Pennywise, it was still the most beautiful face in the world.

"I said 'I don't feel very brave'... I don't. I lived my whole life in fear of him, and here I am picking up the pieces. I feel *weak*. And *stupid*."

"You're a lot of things, but you've *never* been weak *or* stupid. I know that firsthand." he said. She scoffed in disbelief, looking down at the frayed edge of one of her towels.

“Look at me, Beverly” he commanded firmly, shocking her into complying. *“I’m not lying to you.”*

She opened her mouth to express her skepticism, but he gently slapped a hand over her mouth, stopping any noise from exiting.

He stared at her intensely for a moment, green eyes wide and unblinking, causing her to shrink in on herself a bit as he continued. *“Not only do I have no reason to lie to you, I actually feel a deep, annoying urge to be extremely honest with you. I can’t explain it. I’ve never experienced it before. But it’s there. You’ve never been weak, and you’ve never been stupid. You are the single bravest person I’ve ever met, and probably one of the smartest.”*

She searched his eyes for any sign of deceit. Finding none, she nodded her tentative acceptance and he removed his hand.

“Thank you.” she whispered, and he responded by reaching up to gently wipe the remaining tears off of her cheek with his thumb.

“Do you want me to stay with you tonight?” Pennywise asked, looking at her with concern. *“Would that help?”*

She mulled it over for a moment, once again noting the absurdity of the fact that his presence made her feel safer and more at ease.

“I think it might. If you don’t mind.” she responded.

“I don’t mind.” he said, pulling her into another warm embrace.

After a moment, Beverly got up to brush her teeth and toss on a nightgown, turning off the nightstand light as she slipped back into bed and snuggled up under the blankets with Pennywise. He wrapped his massive body around hers and pressed a kiss to her temple.

“He can’t hurt you anymore, Bev” he whispered, and she quickly drifted off to sleep feeling more secure and protected than ever before.

Notes for the Chapter:

Oh, you thought you were going to get another sex scene? Well, joke's on you! It's more emotional crap! Huzzah!

... you'll get more dirty stuff soon enough, I promise.

16. Hunger

When the sun scattered across Beverly's face and woke her the next morning, she didn't think she'd ever been so happy for a Saturday to have finally arrived. This had been an incredibly taxing week, but at least she had these two days to cut herself a bit of slack. And try not to think too much about how she was starting the weekend, curled up in bed with her childhood monster. One of them, at least.

Rolling over to face him, she noticed that Pennywise had returned to his clown form at some point over the course of the night. He was sprawled out on his back with his mouth leaking a small line of drool and soft snoring sounds. She tried to stifle a laugh at the sight but, despite her best efforts, a small snort made its way out.

Pennywise's eyes shot open and immediately darted all over the room, trying to figure out where he was. When he turned his head to the side and spotted her, she noticed that his yellow eyes sported red borders that were quickly fading now that he understood this strange place in which he awoke.

"I didn't know you slept. Aside from the big, long stretches." Beverly said, voice rough and husky from sleep.

"I usually don't. But since someone interrupted that big, long stretch..." he replied in a similarly tired voice, lifting an accusatory brow at her. She blushed, thoroughly charmed by his morning voice and flirtatious facial expression.

"I think I'm going to try that 'shower' thing again." he mumbled, rubbing his eyes with the palms of his hands. "Would you like to join me?"

"Not this time." she told him. "I'm super hungry. I'm just going to make a pot of coffee and some breakfast, then shower in an hour or so."

He gave her a quick kiss before rolling out of bed and heading into the bathroom. "Call if you need any help!" she told him as he closed the door behind him, not wanting Beverly to see if he made a fool of

himself.

Despite his worries, Pennywise navigated the shower as though he'd been showering for years, enjoying the feeling of warm water cascading over his muscles. He didn't want to stay away from Beverly for too long, though, especially considering her mood before they went to sleep the night before, so he sped things along as quickly as he could.

He exited the bathroom a few minutes later to find Beverly sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of the couch, eating a large bowl of cereal and watching Saturday morning cartoons on the television. She reminded him so much of a child in that moment, wrapped in a big fuzzy robe she'd tossed on over her nightgown, that the vision awakened in him a gnawing hunger. His teeth sharpened and mind clouded over as he began spilling large puddles of drool down his clean, bare chest.

Having noticed him standing there for an uncomfortably long amount of time, Beverly placed her bowl on the coffee table and slowly turned her head to look at him questioningly. At the terrifying sight in front of her, she scrambled backward in fear. Slowly, menacingly, he began walking toward her, donning nothing but a white towel wrapped around his waist. The exaggerated movements of the clown's theatrical display transported Beverly back in time, and she became paralyzed with fear for just long enough for him to catch up to her.

Dropping to his knees to hover over her carpet-strewn body, his jagged grin stretched even wider. As his eyes began to roll back in his head and mouth slowly began to hinge open across the red lines on his cheeks, she instantly snapped out of it and did the only thing she could think of that might pull him out of his trance -- she grabbed the back of his head and pulled his face to hers, dragging his sopping lower lip into her mouth. Screwing her eyes tightly closed, she kissed him with all the passion she could muster through her fear, pulling away after a moment to shakily address him.

"Penn, please..." she begged. "Please don't do this."

She felt him pull back rapidly, his body no longer hovering over hers.

Still half-convinced that only pulled back because he had something ominous in store, she worked up the courage to tentatively open one eye just a sliver. When she did, she saw his massive form folded in on itself, pressed tightly to the opposite wall, shaking.

Beverly cautiously made her way toward him on hands and knees, and he lifted his head from its resting spot on his folded arms to look at her pleadingly, tears welling up in his big yellow eyes.

"I... I'm sorry, Bev. I'm so sorry." he mumbled. "I'm so... *hungry*. I haven't hunted since I woke up."

Beverly nodded, still shaken up, but weirdly comforted by the fact that he hadn't been secretly out there devouring children while she was at work.

"Yeah. Yeah... Okay. We have to get you some food." she said, sitting down beside him and laying her head on his damp shoulder to show him she was okay.

He looked hopeful for a moment, before she squashed his giddiness down with a qualifier. "But *no children*."

"Bev, I have to find someone fast. I'm not sure how much longer I can maintain control." he said, clearly afraid of what might happen if he didn't eat soon.

Beverly sat there, silently staring ahead, trying to rack her brain for anyone she could think of in Derry who might deserve a horrible death. She couldn't list a single person. Even the worst people she knew from back in the day, like Henry Bowers, had been victims of their environments. She almost felt sorry for them. Plus, she had no idea what Henry was up to today. He could be spending his free time volunteering with orphans, for God's sake!

As much as it frustrated her to admit, Pennywise had a point when he told her that the logistics of her plan were iffy. She would need to either drastically lower her standards of morality in order to feed her... lover? "*Is that what I'm calling him now? My lover?*" Beverly cringed at her own private word choice before getting back to the more urgent task at hand: she would have to either drastically lower

her standards of morality to feed *Pennywise*, or she would have to somehow attract really bad people to Derry.

“How much time do you *think* you have?” she asked him suddenly.

“I don’t know. It’s never gotten this bad. Maybe two days? Three, if I conserve as much energy as possible.” he said, nervously chewing on his lower lip in his increasing worry.

“I might be able to work with two days.” she responded, an idea occurring to her. “Is there anything that might help in the meantime?”

Pennywise mulled it over for a moment before perking up, clearly having experienced some sort of epiphany “Actually, yes.” he said, a tentative smile making its way onto his mouth once again. “I think there is something that might help.”

Pennywise explained to her that when she laughed -- *really* laughed -- the other night, he received a rush of energy similar to the rush he received from a person’s fear. Not enough to keep him going long-term, but enough to fill in the gaps, he hypothesized.

“So you’re telling me that I can just... *laugh*? And it’ll... *feed* you? Does this mean that if I laugh enough around you, you won’t need to hunt as often?”

“It’s possible.” he said. “I can’t guarantee anything, but it could reduce my need to hunt by a percentage. I’m just not sure what that percentage would be.”

Truth be told, Pennywise was actually excited about the idea that he might not need to hunt as often. As much as he genuinely enjoyed the thrill of the hunt, he enjoyed the thrill of being around Beverly more. Hunting would not only take him away from her for a good chunk of time every couple days, he also hoped that reducing the frequency of hunts might make her less likely to turn on him in the end.

“I have an idea!” Beverly exclaimed, jumping up from her spot on the floor and beginning to change into normal clothing. “Hold tight. I’ll

be back in like 20 minutes!”

Pennywise sat still as he watched her leave, confused about what was happening, but strangely comforted by the fact that she trusted him to be here alone with all of her private things.

Beverly quickly made her way down the street to the local supermarket, knowing that she had spotted a DVD rental machine next to the entrance. Sorting through the catalog, she rented four highly-reviewed comedies before heading inside the store to grab an assortment of snacks to tide her over as she and Pennywise spent the day curled up in bed watching them on her laptop.

When she arrived back at the hotel, she found Pennywise sitting in the exact position she left him in, and realized that he may have taken her command to ‘hold tight’ a bit too literally.

“Come here.” she said, waving him over to the bed and patting the mattress to motion for him to sit down. “Pick one.” she told him, tossing the stack of DVDs onto his lap and walking into the kitchenette to put a bag of popcorn in the microwave. “We’re having what’s called a ‘movie marathon’ today! The funniest ones I could find! I’m bound to get at least a few really good laughs in.”

He beamed at her, sorting through the selection and settling on one that seemed to revolve around a romantic relationship. “*Research!*” he thought to himself.

Grabbing the now-popped bag of popcorn and some paper towels, Beverly made her way back to the bed and slipped Pennywise’s selection into her laptop’s DVD drive before snuggling up next to him on the bed, head on his bare, white chest.

“Popcorn?” she offered, holding the bag up to him as the movie began to play.

17. Gifts

The pair stayed snuggled up in bed watching movies almost all day, with Pennywise alternating between closely observing the behaviors on the screen and closely observing Beverly's reactions to them. Each time she let out a hearty laugh, he did indeed feel a rush of invigorating energy. As expected, it wasn't enough to truly sustain him, but it was a nice little between-meals snack.

When the third film had ended, Beverly got up to shower and make a phone call, leaving Pennywise alone in bed with her laptop, curiously inspecting its components. She exited the bathroom in street clothes, a fact that Pennywise found a bit odd given how they were spending their day.

"Going somewhere?" he asked.

"Actually, yeah. I have to run a couple of errands," she replied. "But I have a surprise for you in about an hour!"

Walking over to his side of the bed, she placed a kiss on his cheek and her watch in his hand. "Meet me at Neibolt at 4:00. And wear your human form." she whispered.

Beverly quickly made her way through her checklist of errands, trying not to think about what she'd done. What she was about to follow through with. Her phone call earlier was to an Augusta-based carpenter named James Herzog, a talented woodworker and terrible man. The father of one of her most traumatized patients, James began sexually abusing his daughter at the age of 3, as well as inflicting such physical torture that the scars - both physical and emotional - would surely last a lifetime.

Of all the people Pennywise could torture, kill, and eat, he was a prime candidate. Still, Beverly's role in it was a lot to try to reconcile with her image of herself. She settled on rationalizing it as saving an innocent child's life, as Pennywise truly seemed unaware of his surroundings and unable to exercise self-control when he'd become ravenously hungry in the hotel room earlier.

Glancing at the clock on her rental car's dashboard, she noticed that it was already 3:52. She quickly made her way to Neibolt, parking at the end of the street and walking over to sit down on the front steps, where she began nervously fidgeting. Looking to her side, she spotted an iron fence post, much like the one she stabbed Pennywise with 15 years ago. She picked it up and twirled it in her hand, reflecting back on that time in her life and wondering how she arrived at her current place in life. Lost in thought, she didn't even hear Pennywise arrive.

"Is *that* my surprise?" he asked, joking tone of voice hiding a small amount of legitimate worry. "I thought we'd already done that. Twice."

She looked up and smiled at his handsome face, patting the space beside her to motion him to sit down.

She explained to him what she'd done, and that James Herzog would be pulling up to Neibolt in about 15 minutes to give him, Robert, a consultation. "You're a real estate investor," she explained, "and you want to know whether Neibolt has a chance at being salvaged, or if it would be a total tear-down. He knows me as Robert's business partner, Joan. But I'm going to take off once he arrives... for obvious reasons."

Beverly continued telling him the backstory of how she selected James and why he deserved to die, hoping it might serve as some sort of moral education for Pennywise. When she heard truck tires crunching over the pothole filled asphalt, she hopped up, placed another quick kiss on his cheek and began to walk off before quickly stopping and running back to him. "One more thing!" she said in a rush. "He's terrified of snakes! My patient mentioned that a few times!"

Pennywise beamed at her with a mouth full of straight white teeth and a look of awe in his green eyes. "Thank you." he whispered. She nodded curtly, turned on her heel, and ran off.

James parked his red truck in front of the garden gate. "You Robert?" he asked, slamming the driver's side door. Pennywise was a bit worried to find that he was a rather large man. While James was shorter than Pennywise at only about 6'1", he was rather portly and

appeared to be quite solid and heavy.

“Sure am.” said Pennywise, putting on a happy face. “Thanks for coming all this way. I heard that you were the best, and I really felt like this needed a good set of eyes.”

“Yeah, of course.” James responded, before turning his eyes to the house behind Pennywise. “Yeesh... quite the fixer-upper, huh?”

Pennywise felt a flare of anger at his words, but powered through. “Yeah, she’s seen better days. I bought this property not knowing whether it was salvageable or whether it would be a total tear-down, but I’m hoping we can save at least a lot of the elements that make it unique. The house is stable, if you want to go inside and take a look.”

Walking inside, James perked up a bit. “She actually looks to be in better shape than I would have thought from the outside. The bones are stable and some of these original hardwoods can be salvaged,” he said, stomping on the floor with his foot, “but things like the kitchen are going to be a total gut-job. We can build some custom cabinets for you though, so that they look original. Or you can go more modern. Up to you.”

“That’s great news!” said Pennywise. “I was hoping to hear that. This house is... special to me.”

He paused for a moment, contemplating his next move. “Do you, uhh... want to see the basement?” he asked, wondering if that was a strange question.

“Of course.” replied James, “Lead the way.”

Pennywise let out a sigh of relief. Apparently the basement was a normal thing for a carpenter to view during this kind of appointment, after all. Pennywise led him down the stairs toward the well.

Since James was a large, full-grown man, Pennywise needed a way to get him into the sewers easily, so while James was busy inspecting the house’s joists, he quickly unhinged his mouth to display his deadlights. Upon turning around to address Pennywise, James was

instantly frozen, his brown eyes clouding over.

Quickly transforming into his insectoid form, Pennywise grabbed James's body and made his way down the well, stomach growling and mouth dripping huge gobs of saliva.

Upon reaching his destination, Pennywise set things in motion for James to slowly awaken before running off to hide in the circus cart, excited to put on a display for the first time in 15 years. From outside its walls, he heard splashing water and a groggy voice. "What the fuck? Where the hell am I?" mumbled James. "Robert?! Robert, are you there?!" he called.

Suddenly, the door of the circus cart burst open and an enormous cobra, nearly 20 feet in length, came slithering out. James froze, more terrified than he'd ever been in his life. As the cobra made its way toward him, it began to coil around his body.

"Oh, Jim... are you afraid? You sure smell like you're afraid." spoke the snake in a deep, inhuman hiss, tongue darting out to taste the air around James's face. "You smell... *deliciousssss*."

Determined to get as much fear out of James as possible before eating him, Pennywise continued taunting him. "Do you know why you're here, *Jimmy*?" he asked. "My partner - I think you know her as Joan - she knows your daughter. She knows all about what you've done to your daughter."

Tears began to pour down James's terrified face as he attempted to stutter out an apology; a promise never to hurt anyone again.

"Oh, I know you won't." said Pennywise, coiling tighter around James's body until his face began to turn purple. "I'm going to make sure of that."

"I could make this quick for you, but where's the fun in that?" he asked deviously. James trembled in fear as Pennywise opened his mouth to display a pair of large, dripping fangs. "Did you know that my venom is the most agonizing substance a human could have coursing through its veins? It will make you feel like your whole body is on fire from the inside out." he explained, voice dropping to a

low, demonic tone. “It will make you *beg me* to put you out of your misery.”

18. Passion

Over the course of the next hour, Pennywise reveled in torturing James, placing several bites all over his large body until he did indeed beg for death. When Pennywise felt that he had milked all fear out of James, replacing it with only resignation, he dealt a final blow and swallowed his entire body in one motion.

Pennywise returned to his insectoid form, more apt for quick digestion, and sat in the expansive room, staring up at the standpipe windows and reflecting on the incredible act of generosity Beverly had displayed. He thought back to the conversations they had back when they shared this space a few days ago, with her wondering whether he was still going to kill her. The thought filled his body with a dread he'd never before experienced - even worse than when the Losers defeated him 15 years ago.

He couldn't lose her. He just... couldn't. He was certain that if she died, he'd quickly follow or descend into madness. Was this... *love*? Did he *love* something other than himself for the first time in his existence? He decided it was a bit too soon to say for sure, but he had a sneaking suspicion that the answer was 'yes'. Either way, he needed to find Beverly and show her how he felt. How much he appreciated her. He needed to make her know that any semblance of a soul he possessed belonged to *her*. He was *hers*. Not only that, he also felt an urgent, instinctual, fiery need to mark her as *his*.

Leaving the sewers and returning to his clown form, still covered in blood from his recent meal, he swiftly made his way to Room 27 of the Old Derry Inn. He ran faster than he'd ever run in his life and arrived at the door breathless.

Beverly heard a loud, urgent pounding on the door. Nervously getting up to answer it, she found herself face-to-face with a clown costume absolutely drenched in blood, covering a broad, heaving chest. Horrified, she looked up to Pennywise's face to find his head down, sharp-toothed mouth open and panting, red-rimmed eyes intensely staring at her through dark lashes.

She was terrified, thinking she had shot herself in the foot by offering

him a meal, unlocking some deep-seated hunger in him. Surely he was here to eat her now.

Instead, he interrupted her thoughts by lunging forward and grabbing her by the back of her head, kissing her roughly. Walking her over to the opposite wall, he hoisted her up until her legs wrapped around his waist and he pinned her to the hard surface, much like the first time they connected. But certainly less gentle.

Beverly kissed him back passionately, noting that his sharp-toothed mouth tasted faintly of blood. Strangely, she found that she didn't care. Instead, the experience unearthed something primal in her and she moaned into his mouth, relishing in the feverish treatment.

Pennywise soon pulled her body away from the wall and threw her onto the bed. He stood over her, snarling, while sharp claws sprouted from his hands to shred away his gloves. While the image would normally be terrifying, Beverly felt a delicious heat rush through her body at the anticipation of what was to come, trusting him not to harm her.

Using his talons, he ripped away at her clothing until her body was bare to him. With his jagged teeth, he bit his way down her body, just shy of breaking skin. Beverly gasped at the mixture of pain and intense pleasure, twining her hands into his orange hair and tugging lightly, eliciting a loud growl from deep within Pennywise's blood-stained chest.

Making his way to Beverly's most sensitive region, Pennywise replaced his bites with licks, teasing her inner thighs until she thought she might explode. Suddenly he plunged his unnaturally long tongue deep within her, drawing out an uncontrollable moan.

Staring up at her with glowing, red-rimmed eyes, he curled his tongue inside her until it stroked against her g-spot. She gasped loudly and balled the bedsheets up in her hands, thrusting her hips upward to help him lick even deeper. Noticing her intense reaction, he quirked a brow at her and continued his motions, curling his tongue forward over and over again until she came harder than ever before, screaming into the open air of the hotel room.

Crawling up and over Beverly's panting body, Pennywise unfastened his pants and positioned himself at her now soaking entrance. He grinned down at her wickedly, fangs dripping saliva, still fully clothed in his bloody costume. Suddenly, he pushed into her hard, filling her completely with his now painfully engorged shaft. Giving her no reprieve, he slammed into her relentlessly, the hotel room filling with her pleased screams, his demonic growls, and the sound of the upholstered headboard crashing against the thin wall.

Leaning down, he kissed her hard on the mouth before pulling out and flipping her over, positioning her on her hands and knees. Taking hold of her fiery red hair in one clawed hand and her soft, pliant hip in the other, he plunged into her from behind. Establishing a rough, needy rhythm once more, his claws dug into her hip until small spots of blood appeared.

He pulled her hair tighter, approaching his climax, and the rough treatment threw Beverly over the edge once more. She screamed and pulsed around him, milking his own orgasm. He roared loudly as he came, the hotel room lights flickering under the immense power.

Fully spent, he collapsed down onto her, placing soft kisses to the back of her neck and massaging her scalp with the claws still deeply embedded in her hair.

"I take it you liked your surprise?" she laughed, voice muffled by the mattress she was pressed tightly against.

"Very much." he responded, turning her head around to kiss her tenderly. "I love... d the surprise." he said, stopping himself from saying what was truly on his mind, afraid of how she might react.

He rolled off of her and pulled her to him so that they were both on their sides, facing. Lightly running his claws over her cheeks and looking her in the eyes, hoping his conveyed the depth of his emotions, he simply said "You, Beverly Marsh, are the best thing that's ever happened to me."

She pulled him into another kiss and they quickly drifted off together.

Notes for the Chapter:

I will be going out of town for a few days, so I won't be able to update for a while, but I wanted to leave you guys with this chapter... because reasons.

19. Heartache

With the breaking light of Sunday morning, Beverly awoke more exhausted than she had in a long time. The previous night's *activities* combined with strange, emotional dreams that kept her from obtaining a deep sleep made for a poor combination leading into what promised to be an eventful and trying day. It was the day of Alvin Marsh's memorial service.

Beverly laid in bed staring at the ceiling while Pennywise snored softly beside her. This was it. After today, she could resume her normal life. She could get back to sunny California and put Derry behind her once again. So why wasn't she excited? Was her unease just due to the anticipation of the heavy day to come? Or was it something deeper?

She turned her head to look at the clown beside her, its blood-stained chest rising and falling steadily. What would become of Pennywise once Beverly left? Would he return to eating children and terrorizing the town of Derry, or would the moral education she had painstakingly worked to provide stick?

Would she forget him again? She felt a pang in her chest at the thought, and a lump made its way into her throat.

Startled awake by the swiftly changing scent of the air around his face, Pennywise turned to look at Beverly with a face full of concern. Her heart ached again.

"What's wrong?" he asked, rolling over to face her.

"Oh, umm... it's my father's memorial today." she said, pulling herself together a bit to deliver this simultaneous truth and lie. Sure, it was the day of the memorial, but she was acutely aware of the fact that the memorial wasn't why she was sad. In fact, she felt suspiciously detached from her father's death now that all of the arrangements were squared away and she was out of the storm of stress that had overtaken her life for the past week.

“Can you, uhh... would you mind coming with me?” she asked.

“Of course.” he replied simply, scooting over to place a kiss on her forehead.

She wondered whether she was doing herself a disservice by continuing to request his presence, knowing that it would only make their parting day more painful. She figured she should probably begin to place some distance between them, but the fact of the matter was that she just couldn't bring herself to do it. Being around Pennywise for the past week had made her... *happy* . Truly happy. For once in her life, she felt cherished and supported and... something deeper.

Hopping out of bed, she grabbed both of Pennywise's bare, claw-adorned hands in her own and pulled lightly. “Come on,” she said, “let's take a shower.”

Noting his look of excitement, she clarified. “*Just* a shower, Penn. Save the other stuff for later.”

A theatrical pout crossed his shiny red lips, but he obliged, following her into the bathroom and making quick work of removing his bloody costume before hopping in the shower with Beverly.

Turning toward him, Beverly reached up to run her wet hands through his orange hair, even wilder than usual after his heavy night of sleep. She dipped his head under the running water and slicked his hair back as his hands came up to hold her waist lightly.

That damn ache in her chest had returned. She rested her head against his pallid chest as he pulled her tight against his body, swaying her body gently as though they were dancing together. After a moment, she pulled herself together and pulled back, placing a soft kiss to his sternum before turning to grab the bar of soap. She worked up a lather in her hands and began to run them all over his body, gently washing away the final traces of James Herzog's blood.

Mimicking her actions, Pennywise removed the bar of soap from her hands and placed it in his own, rubbing it vigorously to produce small white bubbles. He washed her tenderly, holding her close to his body and placing the occasional kiss on her nose, forehead, or

temple.

Once they were clean, the pair exited the shower and threw on the two pink bathrobes the hotel provided. Beverly smiled wanly at how ridiculous he looked, desperately hoping for the pain in her chest to leave. Everything he did today just made it worse. Every look he gave her, every gentle touch. She wondered if her heart was literally breaking.

Glancing at the clock, she realized that there was only an hour left before her father's memorial service. She made quick work of tossing on some subtle makeup, putting her hair up in a simple chignon, and dressing in the conservative black sheath she'd packed for the occasion.

She directed her attention to Pennywise, still dressed in his fuzzy pink robe and keeping himself busy reading the local crime reports in the Sunday paper the hotel staff had left on Beverly's doorstep. "No offense, but uhh... you need to change your... you know." she said, motioning up and down his body with her finger.

"Ah, right." he said, grabbing a pillow to hide his face during the transformation, lest his metamorphosis disturb her further on this difficult morning.

He dropped the pillow to reveal the handsome human form she had come to know, looking absolutely dashing in his pink robe. Once again, she cursed the ache in her chest before turning back to the bathroom mirror to finish getting ready.

While Beverly adorned her ears with simple pearl studs, Pennywise conjured up a simple, well-tailored, dark grey suit. With only minutes to spare, what appeared to be a beautiful, young, entirely human couple walked out of the hotel door and hopped in Beverly's rental car.

A few minutes later, they pulled up in front of the funeral home, and a short, stout, elderly lady walked out to greet them. She pulled Beverly into a hug as she exited the car, expressing her condolences, before turning her attention to Pennywise.

“And who is this handsome man, dear?” she asked, a mirthful look in her eyes.

“Oh, this is my friend... *Robert*.” she finished lamely. “Robert, this is Norma Tyler. She owns the funeral home.”

“Well, it’s very nice to meet you, Robert. How did you two meet?” Norma continued.

Beverly, afraid of what might come out of Pennywise’s mouth, jumped in to explain their connection. “I knew Robert back in middle school. But we uhh... fell out of touch until quite recently.” she said, fiddling with the straps on her purse.

“Oh, well how nice! You’re from Derry, then? How strange - I don’t recall seeing you around. And I would remember such a tall drink of water!” Norma addressed Pennywise, winking flirtatiously upon finishing her sentence.

“Oh, I don’t imagine you would have seen me around.” he responded. “I’ve been away from Derry for 15 years now. I only returned to Derry because Beverly did.”

At this, Norma laughed and turned to Beverly, placing a hand on her shoulder. “Oh, Beverly. Honey.” she said. “I think that’s a sign.”

Pennywise chuckled lightly and placed an arm around Beverly’s waist. “I think you’re right about that, Ms. Tyler.” he said, smiling down at Beverly.

She looked up to meet his tender gaze. Her heart broke all over again.

20. Closure

As Beverly and Pennywise entered the small room that had been set aside for Alvin's memorial, it became glaringly obvious that he was not a popular man. Beverly had purposely reserved the smallest room at the funeral home, capable of seating up to 30 guests, as opposed to the 75 and 150-person capacity of the other two available spaces. Still, the room felt positively cavernous when she looked around to find that fewer than 10 people showed, including herself, Pennywise, and Ms. Norma Tyler.

Beverly wasn't quite sure how to feel about this. On one hand, she was unsurprised and felt a smug sense of satisfaction. On the other, her deeply compassionate nature caused an inadvertent pang of sympathy and sadness at realizing how few people cared about him throughout his life.

She took a moment to look over the faces in the room, recognizing only two. Seated in the second row was her childhood neighbor, Mr. Johnson. He always seemed to be a nice man, but she didn't know him particularly well. The other face she recognized, currently staring at a framed photo of a young, striking Alvin Marsh displayed behind his urn of ashes, was the face of Jack Kowalski.

If Alvin Marsh was a bad man, Jack Kowalski was downright evil. Her father's closest confidant throughout his adult life, Jack Kowalski was a violent drunk with some particularly disturbing patterns of behavior. Jack and Alvin met shortly after the death of Beverly's mother, when Alvin had taken to drinking away his pain each night at the local pub, The Timber Mill. Jack had established himself as a regular at The Timber Mill, but typically sat in silence, refusing to even make smalltalk with its barkeep. Something about Alvin's depression intrigued him, though, and he latched right on.

Throughout her pubescence, Jack and Alvin would get drunk - sometimes at The Timber Mill, sometimes in Beverly's living room in front of their old TV - and Jack would regale Alvin with gleeful accounts of beating his wife, torturing and killing runaway pets, and frequenting a motel in Portland widely known to be a hotspot for underage sex trafficking. Now and then, Jack would get particularly

brazen and ask Alvin to “share” Beverly with him. Fortunately, Alvin was a possessive man and never agreed to this suggestion, but that didn’t stop Jack from groping Beverly when Alvin wasn’t looking.

She knew she’d been staring at Jack Kowalski for far too long, but he hadn’t yet turned around to notice the attention. One person who did, however, was Pennywise. Her wide-eyed stare and the powerful scent of hatred and fear rolling off of her body unnerved him.

“Bev, who is that man?” he whispered, voice full of concern.

“Jack.” she said simply, not breaking her stare at the back of his head. She chose not to elaborate further, but turned her head to look up at Pennywise. “I don’t know what his fears are.” she whispered, searching his green eyes frantically.

A look of understanding and determination crossed Pennywise’s regal human features. “Don’t worry. I’ll find them.” he said firmly, giving her hand a squeeze before walking over to Jack to strike up a conversation.

Beverly made small talk with the remaining guests, each of whom approached her to express their condolences as she powered through and pretended to be genuinely torn up over the death of her father. Occasionally she’d steal a glance over at Pennywise, who had somehow managed to gain the trust of Jack Kowalski and was... *making him laugh*? She had only seen the man laugh a handful of times throughout her life. Damn... Pennywise was *talented*.

She felt an odd sense of savage pride at seeing her lover in action - this incredibly powerful ancient creature hard at work doing her bidding - and the little boost in her mood made the remainder of the social hour pass by quickly before Ms. Norma Tyler began to play soft music in a signal that the actual service was about to begin.

She waved Pennywise over to sit beside her, and he smiled, holding up a finger as if to say “just a moment”, before turning his attention back to Jack and making plans to meet up for a drink following the service.

Pennywise sat with Beverly for the remainder of the service, giving

her hand or thigh a comforting squeeze each time he sensed her mood worsening. At its conclusion, the two parted ways with a tender kiss, and Pennywise jogged off to meet up with Jack. Beverly said her goodbyes to Norma, grabbed her father's urn, and began to drive 50 miles Northwest to a small, pristine lake in the Appalachian foothills that Alvin liked to visit for fishing and solitude.

On the shore of the lake, Beverly sat upon a log, awkwardly holding what remained of her father's body. She looked down at it and let out a shaky breath before addressing him. "I know this is weird, Daddy. But I have some things I need to say to you."

Tears began to fall from her eyes as she continued, and she was immensely grateful that nobody else was out on the lake today to witness this strange scene. For the next ten minutes, she unloaded everything - All of her hatred and love toward him. The weight of her grudge and overwhelming desire to forgive him. The fact that she didn't believe she ever could, no matter how hard she wanted to be able to. But that she at least hoped he was at peace now.

Hoisting herself off the log, she scattered his ashes on the rocky shore and walked away, the urn in her hand empty but for a few stray ashes that clung to its craggy interior. Feeling the beginnings of a sense of closure blooming in her chest, she drove back to the Old Derry Inn, windows down and music on full blast.

While she had the hotel room to herself, Beverly decided to get to work organizing all of her bills and ensuring that everything had either already been paid or was scheduled for payment in her meticulously-kept planner. A glance at the most recent bank statement that had been delivered to her hotel mailbox instantly dampened the optimistic mood she'd been in since leaving the lake.

After paying nearly \$20,000 in medical bills for Alvin's unsuccessful treatment and subsequent hospice care, plus an additional \$3800 toward his cremation and memorial service, Beverly's account was in its most barren condition since she was in graduate school, eating little aside from 20-cent ramen packets to survive. There was barely enough money to pay her next month's rent on her beachside condo, let alone cover things like gas and groceries.

Feeling entirely overwhelmed, Beverly moved toward the bed to lay down and think. As she approached, she noticed the Sunday paper Pennywise had been reading that morning still strewn all over the bed. With a sigh, she began to collect the errant pages, freezing when an advertisement caught her eye. One of the historic downtown buildings had recently been renovated and turned into loft apartments - *beautiful* loft apartments, with tall windows and original hardwood floors, lovingly restored. And boy were they cheap compared to what she paid for her California condo that was only a third the size of these units!

"Am I actually entertaining this?" she thought to herself, letting an audible laugh out into the cold air of the empty hotel room. *"I have enjoyed my time here so far... oddly enough. I think it's been pretty good for my healing process. I've been confronting my demons. In a somewhat overly literal sense."*

Moreover, she couldn't argue with the cold, hard facts - the cost of living in Derry was almost outrageously low, and so was her bank account. She pulled out her phone to send a text to Tiffany Green, an acquaintance back in Santa Monica who mentioned that she had been looking for a condo similar to Bev's for a while, but hadn't had luck in that search so far.

"Hey Tiff - are you still looking for a condo near the beach?" she wrote.

Almost immediately, she received a reply back - *"Yes! Do you know of one?"*

Needing to reflect on it a bit more, she put her phone away before responding, and focused on continuing to think through her options, making a mental pro-and-con list.

Cons: Derry was less fun than Santa Monica, and the weather was a lot worse.

Pros: Derry was far cheaper, and she could keep tabs on Pennywise if she stayed here.

Her train of thought was derailed by a knock on the door. "Speak of the devil!" she mumbled aloud, hopping up to answer it. In front of

her stood Pennywise, still dressed in his neatly-pressed charcoal suit, holding armfuls of Chinese takeout from Jade of the Orient. Beverly's stomach grumbled appreciatively, and Pennywise chuckled at the noise before leaning down to give her a kiss on the cheek.

"I figured you could use this." he said, holding up the bag. "Sounds like I was right."

As she was about to ask how he paid for the food, he explained to her that James Herzog had about \$60 in his wallet when he came by Neibolt yesterday. Enough to pay for Jack's drinks at The Timber Mill, as well as an assortment of Pan-Asian dinner treats.

Walking into the kitchenette, he immediately got to work laying all of the food out on the kitchen counter while Beverly set the dining table and opened a bottle of wine.

"How was *Jack*?" she asked, the name tasting bitter in her mouth.

"Terrible. It took a lot out of me to be cordial. But he likes me, so that's beneficial to our end-goal." he responded.

"You didn't 'go all the way' with him today, then?" she asked, scooping a pile of fried rice onto her plate.

"No. I'm waiting until I can better understand his fears." Pennywise explained, chowing down on a large chunk of mandarin chicken before continuing. "And I'm waiting until I get really hungry. Since my supply is more limited these days, I'd rather be smart about when I choose to feed."

Beverly felt comforted by hearing that he had thought about these things and was able to exercise control. He continued to recount his dreadful conversations with Jack Kowalski as they finished up their dinner, making the occasional wry joke at Jack's expense that caused Beverly to double over in laughter, providing a small boost to Pennywise's energy stores.

When they had finished up their dinner, he handed her a fortune cookie. Breaking it open, she pulled out the tiny sliver of paper hidden within. On it were nine simple words: *The right choice is right*

in front of you.

Slowly, deliberately, she set the paper down on the glass tabletop and looked up at Pennywise, a serious expression on her face.

“I’m moving back to Derry.” she said.

21. Rollercoaster

He stared at her for a moment, green eyes unblinking. "Say that again." he demanded, a serious expression on his face.

"I... I'm moving back to Derry?" she responded sheepishly, voice wavering in her uncertainty.

"You're moving back to Derry?" he asked pointedly.

She worried her bottom lip with her teeth as she nodded slowly, brows still furrowed in concern.

In an instant, he was out of his chair and bounding toward her. She flinched a bit when he pulled her out of her own seat, but calmed when she discovered that all he wanted to do was pick her up and spin her around in his glee, placing rapid little kisses all over her face.

He gently placed her feet back on the ground after a moment, willing her to look him in the eyes as he whispered to her "I've imagined this moment over and over again. I didn't think it would come true."

"Well, it did." she said, beaming up at him. "My bank account needs a while to rebound, and the cost of living here is really low." she explained.

His mood faltered a bit at hearing that he wasn't the reason Beverly was sticking around, but he reminded himself that there were probably hundreds of other places she could move that would offer Derry's low cost of living. And yet she chose this place. The place where *he* lived. That was good enough for him. At least for right now.

Remembering that she needed to respond to Tiffany's text, she reached for her phone and quickly typed out a message - *"Yeah, do you want to sublet my place? The lease expires in two months and you can take over after that."*

Tiffany responded with the same speed as before - *"OMG YES! Where are you going to live, though?"*

She explained to Tiffany that she was headed back to Maine for a while, but that she'd be in Santa Monica again to collect her belongings, and the two made tentative plans to meet up for dinner and drinks upon Beverly's return.

Feeling content with her decision, Beverly led Pennywise over to the couch with a smile, curling up next to his large body and flipping on the TV. She looked up at him after a few minutes and placed a gentle kiss on his jawline.

"Aren't you uncomfortable in that suit? And that face?" she asked.

He looked surprised at the question. "I am a bit, yeah. Do you mind if I change back into the clown?"

"Of course I don't mind. I'd prefer it, in fact." she told him.

"You would?" he asked, genuinely confused.

"Of course." she said. "That's your face. As handsome as this one is, and Penn - it's *very* handsome - I like being able to see *you*."

He smiled down at her lovingly, deciding against correcting her and informing her that the clown was not, in fact, his true form. He just shifted back once she looked away and was indeed more comfortable.

After they'd had their fill of sitcom reruns, the pair retired to the bed where they cuddled up and talked late into the night until each fell deep asleep. When her alarm clock rang after what seemed like only minutes, Pennywise hopped up and into the shower, preparing to leave her to go about her workday in peace.

"What time should I swing by tonight?" he asked as he exited the steamy bathroom, rubbing his wild orange hair with a dingy white towel.

Bev checked her schedule and let him know she'd be done with work by 5:30, standing up on her tiptoes to place a kiss to his cherry-red lips.

As soon as he walked out the door, she hopped in the shower and

quickly got to work. Fortunately, her workday passed quickly and fruitfully, leaving her with the feeling that she was making real breakthroughs with some of her patients... despite their parents' best efforts to derail her treatment plans.

At 5:30 on the dot, a knock sounded on the hotel door. Swinging it open, she threw herself at Pennywise's chest, wrapping her arms around his slender waist.

"Hey you." Pennywise laughed, leaning down to place a kiss to the crown of Beverly's fiery red hair. "How was work?"

"So busy! Productive, but busy." Bev responded as she walked off and began to buzz around the kitchenette. "I didn't even have time to eat today, so I'm starving! Luckily I have some pasta and a jar of sauce here for emergencies."

Pennywise got to work pouring them each a hefty glass of Malbec from the fridge as Beverly set out ingredients while continuing to vent.

"I do believe that my patient's parents are trying their hardest," she explained, "but I'll tell you one thing - after working in this field for a while, I've learned all about what *not* to do when I have my own kids."

"You... want kids?" he asked quietly from the dining table, disheartened by the revelation.

"Yeah, of course. I mean, maybe not '*of course*'. I don't want to make it sound like every woman wants kids or anything, but yeah. I personally *do* want kids one day. Or at least *one* kid. Maybe two. I'll have to see how the first one goes." Beverly clarified, turning on the burner to begin boiling a large pot of water.

"Ah." he said, looking down at his gloved hands, folded in front of him on the glass tabletop.

"... Why do you ask?" she inquired cautiously, noting his obvious unhappiness at learning this about her.

"I just... I didn't know that about you." he explained, bitterness

beginning to creep into his voice. “When are you trying to *start a family*, Beverly?”

“Well, I don’t know, *Pennywise*. I don’t have it all planned out to the exact date and time.”

“Right. I suppose you’d have to meet someone and *fall in love* first, huh?” he jabbed.

That’s when it hit her. “Oh my god, you’re *jealous!*” she laughed, tossing a box of rotini into the pot. “Why? How can you possibly be jealous of someone who doesn’t even exist in my life yet?”

“Why? *Why?! Jesus Christ, Beverly!*” her own vernacular creeping into his exasperated speech. He sighed loudly and raked his hands through his wild orange hair.

“Because *I’m* someone.” he continued. “And *I’m* in love with you, Bev! But I guess I’m an idiot for thinking you could ever feel something real for, oh how did you put it? Ah, right... a *monster*. But I exist in your life and you just said your hypothetical *someone* doesn’t, so I guess there’s my answer.”

Beverly was floored by his outburst. He was... *in love* with her? Was that even possible for someone - some *thing* - like him?

She stared down at the stovetop silently, mouth hanging open, and after the longest 45 seconds of his billion years of existence, he walked up beside her and waved a gloved hand in front of her face. “Bev, say something. Anything.” he said tersely, trying to control the volume of his voice.

She didn’t. She just stood there frozen.

With a frustrated sigh, he turned and walked out the door, leaving her glued to her spot in the kitchenette, staring at a pot of pasta that was now boiling over.

22. Reconciliation

The acrid smell of burning starch woke Beverly from her trance. Truth be told, she hadn't even realized Pennywise had left, and she turned around to address him. Her mouth snapped shut upon seeing an empty hotel room and an almost full glass of wine left where he sat just a few minutes prior.

'He left. He left me.' she thought to herself, staring at his empty seat. *'I fucked it up. I can't believe I ruined this.'*

'I have to find him. I can't lose him.' she continued, turning off the burner and tossing on a pair of knee-high rainboots before running out the door and toward the place she knew he must be now - the place they'd first met. *Really* met.

Trudging through the greywater, she arrived in the cavernous room faster than ever before, panting and sweating from her athletic endeavor. Looking around, she didn't see any trace of him, and began to wonder whether she'd been mistaken in thinking he'd come down here after leaving. Right as she was about to turn around and leave, she heard a creak from the wood of the circus cart.

Moving closer to inspect, she noticed that the door was slightly ajar, and pushed it open all the way to reveal an enormous clown, curled up in the fetal position on a worn-out mattress, his back to her.

Dropping to her knees to crawl toward him, she placed a hand on his shoulder. He remained still, refusing to turn around and meet her eyes. It broke her heart.

"I'm so sorry, Penn..." she began gently. "I had no idea you felt that way."

He took in a shaky breath, holding it for a while before working up the courage to address her in a pained voice. "How did you *think* I felt about you?"

"I don't know, Penn... I guess I thought you thought I was a fun way to pass the time? That I alleviated your boredom? That you enjoyed

having sex with me?" The unspoken subtext practically screamed *'That's what I'm used to with other guys'* .

"Bev, think about it." he began gently, shifting to sit up and face her, taking both her hands in his. "Think about everything I've done because of you. I've spent every possible moment with you for over a week now. I know that's not much time, and I understand if it's too early for you to feel the same, but I need you to understand that I really do love you, Bev. More than I ever thought possible."

She eyed him skeptically. He seemed genuine, but at the end of the day, this was all so foreign to Beverly, who had spent her life as nothing more than a plaything for other men.

"I don't know what more I can say to make you believe me, Bev, but just think of everything we've been through. Everything we've done. Everything *I've* done *for* you. I even changed my diet because of you! Do you honestly think I'd do all that if I just saw you as a fun way to pass the time? Do you think I'd do that for anything short of love?"

To be honest, she hadn't really thought much about why he did all of those things since the first couple of days, an oversight that now seemed pretty ridiculous to her in retrospect. She had just been... going with the flow. Beverly stared at the wooden wall for a moment in contemplation before looking back to his painted face, which wore an expression that told her he was clearly struggling to keep himself from falling apart.

"Okay, so then what is this, Penn?" she asked, her hands gesturing at the space between their bodies. "What are we doing here? Are you saying you want a *relationship* with me or something?"

"I'm saying that I kind of thought we already had one," he said, voice cracking slightly as he fought to suppress his emotions, "but clearly I was mistaken."

"Oh." she said flatly, feeling surprised and more than a little bit guilty. "Shit, I'm sorry, Penn. I didn't realize."

"Clearly. Well, if we're done here..." he trailed off, standing up to walk past her and out of the circus cart toward the drainpipe that

would lead him to the river, unable to bear the situation any longer.

She followed, catching his silk-covered forearm in her small hand and halting his motions. Beverly stared at the spot where their bodies were joined for a moment before quietly stating "I... I would like that, Penn. A relationship, I mean. With you."

His head swirled with a myriad of emotions. He was elated, of course, but still couldn't shake the feeling that even if they were to enter into something on a more official basis, it would have a definite expiration date. If the thought of losing her now seemed unbearable, he didn't want to think of how it would feel once their lives had become even more deeply intertwined.

"Bev," he said, hooking a finger under her chin to tilt her head up toward his. "As happy as it makes me to hear that - and it does; it makes me *so fucking happy* - are we just going to ignore the fact that you said you want children one day? I hate to have to keep reminding you of our *differences*, but I don't think you and I can... you know... *create offspring* together."

"Maybe, maybe not. I don't think either of us actually knows the answer to that." she said, not wanting to give much thought to the logistics, though Pennywise could smell a small spike of fear rolling off her skin. "But creating biological offspring is not the only way to have children."

"Sure, but you'd really want a child with *me*? *Me*, Beverly?" he asked pointedly, fully aware of how ridiculous the prospect sounded.

"I don't know, Penn..." she said, sighing in frustration as she paced around the damp room. "Like I said, it's a long way off. And we'd have a lot to think about. Not to mention the fact that we haven't even touched on whether *you* want kids - and yes, I'm purposely avoiding the very obvious joke there. But I know that I don't want to lose you right now. I don't want to let go of what we have."

She paused for a moment before continuing. "Penn, I've spent my whole life looking for someone who would love me. *Dreaming* of being loved. *Really* loved. I've been so caught up in my own thoughts that I didn't recognize it when it was right in front of me. I really am

sorry. And I really do want to be with you. I'm not just moving back to Derry because it's cheap, you know. I could throw a dart at a map and find a place more affordable than Santa Monica. I chose this place because I can't bear the thought of losing *you*."

He took a step forward, slowly pulling her to his chest in a gentle hug. Running his gloved fingers through her silky hair, he let out a shaky breath that Beverly felt as much as heard. Placing a kiss to the top of her head, he whispered "You're not going to lose me. I love you, Beverly Marsh."

She began to cry silently in his arms, her own wrapping around his waist to squeeze his body tight to hers.

"I know. I know that now, Penn." she said, voice cracking through her tears.

It wasn't the response he was hoping for, but he fully recognized that it was still early for her. She had just learned of his feelings an hour ago, and her past wounds surely made it difficult for her to process these types of emotions. He could be patient. He could be patient for her. Only for her.

He rocked her body gently, pouring everything he had into their embrace as the sun set behind the standpipe windows.

23. Arrangements

The pair eventually made their way back to the Old Derry Inn, where they drifted off to sleep earlier than normal, exhausted from their emotional day. When Tuesday morning rolled around, Beverly awoke feeling more rested and more stable than she had since arriving in Derry. She quietly prepped a cup of coffee before hopping in the shower, not wanting to wake Pennywise from his slumber.

By the time she exited the bathroom, he was up and sluggishly making his way about the hotel room. As she poured herself a mug of coffee, Beverly smiled warmly at how cute he looked sitting at the dining table, yawning and rubbing his eyes. Her powerful yet adorable... *boyfriend*? She would really need to come up with something better to call him.

"Is work going to be as busy today as it was yesterday?" he asked in a tired voice, watching the swirling patterns in her coffee mug as she poured in a hefty glug of creamer.

"No, I don't think so. I'm only working until 2:00, anyway. I'm going to run by some leasing offices and see if I can take a look at their units, since I don't have any patients scheduled for this afternoon." she told him, holding up the paper to show him the apartment listings she'd noticed.

"Aww, and right when I was about to ask you to move in with me!" Pennywise teased, a theatrical pout on his red lips. It was a joke, but he also wanted to gauge her reaction to the idea of the two becoming more serious, now that they were officially in a *relationship*.

"Ha! Something tells me my professional credibility would suffer if I started taking video calls from a sewer!" she joked back.

"Fair enough." he conceded. "How many places do you have on the list?"

"Three," she answered, "but I'm really only excited about two of them. The other is a backup option. I'm not sure I'll need it, though. Derry's cost of living is so much lower than Santa Monica's. My

money really goes a long way here, so I imagine most leasing offices would be excited to have someone with my salary applying.”

“That’s good. Just make sure to pick one in a safe location. I don’t know if you’ve heard, but they say that there are monsters hanging around this town.” he said with a flirtatious wink.

“Ha-ha. Very clever.” she responded with a small roll of her bright blue eyes. “Alright, time to get to it. I have some insurance paperwork I have to file before my first session. I should be done with the apartment tours by around 5:00, if you’d like to come by and join me for dinner. I can show you the photos of whichever place I end up choosing.” she said with a warm smile, pausing before adding on a qualifier, “Don’t bring any of your own food, though! Jack Kowalski is not welcome in my hotel room.”

“You know,” he said, taking her face in his gloved hands, “I think it’s really rude that you never let me eat my own cuisine during our dinner dates.” He paused to place a gentle peck on her lips. “But fine. I’ll see you at 5:00.”

Watching Pennywise walk out the door, Beverly felt a giddiness the likes of which she hadn’t experienced since receiving a certain postcard as a young teen. Willing herself to wipe the dumb smile off her face before her first video call of the day, she got to work doing the most mind-numbingly boring part of her job - submitting insurance paperwork. If anything could dampen a mood, it was that.

Her workday flew by quickly and without much stress. Before she knew it, 2:00 had already rolled around. She made her way to the first leasing office on her list - the backup option, if the two places she was actually excited about didn’t work out. They immediately fit her in for a viewing and, as she expected, it was fine. Just fine. It reminded her of her beachside condo in Santa Monica, cramped and a bit dated... though considerably more appropriately priced.

Next on her list was her second choice - considerably better than the first option, but smaller than it seemed from the listing photos, with some questionable design choices and a location in a part of town with notoriously limited parking options.

By the time she made her way to the leasing office for her top choice apartment, she was beginning to feel like Goldilocks. Luckily for her, this one really was *just right*. It was everything it seemed from the ad in the paper - open and spacious, full of natural light from tall windows, beautifully appointed with state-of-the-art appliances, and it came with a private rooftop and not one but *two* designated parking spots.

"If I submit an application right now, how long will it take you guys to get back to me?" she asked the leasing agent, a handsome and immaculately-dressed young man who would have looked more appropriate in Santa Monica than in Derry.

"Oh, my husband and I own the building, so we could give you an answer pretty immediately, if you brought along supporting documentation." he told her.

She smiled widely, opening her large satchel to pull out a folder filled with bank statements, paystubs, a recent credit report, and contact information for personal references. Say what you will about Beverly's life choices, but she was always prepared.

"Wow! This is very thorough!" he exclaimed, combing through the documentation. Placing the documents back in her folder, he pulled out his phone to send a text to his husband. A few seconds later, his phone buzzed, having received a reply.

"When can you move in?" he asked with a smile.

Beverly was elated. She beamed at him, and told him she could sign the lease right then and there, but that she'd need to collect her belongings from California prior to actually occupying the space.

"Not a problem at all!" he assured her, leading her back downstairs to the small leasing office. "We can set it up so the lease kicks in two weeks from now, if that works for you."

He drew up the paperwork, which Beverly happily signed before bidding him farewell and making her way back to the Old Derry Inn, where her time would soon be coming to a close.

By 4:30, Beverly was back in her room, where she quickly hopped in the shower, refreshed her hairstyle, and applied a bit of makeup. Not allowing herself to dwell on the fact that she was getting all dolled up for a romantic evening with the creature that once terrorized her and her friends but was now her *boyfriend* (she still needed to find a better term), she threw on an understated but form-flattering ivory maxi dress, and polished it all off with a single spritz of her favorite 'special occasion' perfume.

Almost immediately, Beverly heard a knock on the hotel door. She hopped over with a huge grin on her face, genuinely excited to see Pennywise. Upon opening it, her grin turned to a look of mixed surprise and confusion at the handsome, bare-faced man standing in front of her wearing a well-tailored, very expensive looking charcoal suit and holding a bottle of high-end champagne.

24. Celebrations

Notes for the Chapter:

Okay, okay, I had to toy with you guys a bit with that last cliffhanger. It's just Pennywise. She's just surprised to see him in such a fancy, expensive outfit - and holding such a fancy, expensive bottle.

But if it's strange confrontations you're after, hooo boy! You just wait!

"Wow, Penn! What's all this?" she asked, surprise giving way to an appreciative gaze at his well-fitted ensemble. He looked like he'd been pulled from the pages of a men's fashion magazine.

"Well, I assume we're celebrating your new apartment. And, if you didn't get an apartment today, we'll drink away the pain." he said, walking over to the mini-bar to grab two wine glasses.

"As I understand it," he continued, holding up the wine glasses in one hand, "these are not the right shape. But we can improvise."

With his free hand, Pennywise grabbed a white dishtowel from a nearby drawer and tossed it over the wine glasses. He gave a theatrical spin before pulling the towel away to reveal two crystal champagne flutes.

Bev was flabbergasted. "Wh-how?" she stammered, but was met only with a knowing, straight-toothed grin as he filled the flutes. Though his human form made her temporarily forget, she reminded herself that he was a shapeshifter and able to perform a good deal of what someone like her might call magic.

"Champagne for the lady?" he said, holding one out to her.

She took the glass, still silently staring at him, and he lifted his own to tap it against hers. "To finding a place, I assume?" he asked, bringing his head down to look her in the eyes in an attempt to snap her back to reality.

“Oh, umm, yeah! Sorry!” she said in a rush. “I signed a lease just an hour ago. On my top choice. It’s really great!”

She took a long sip of her drink while making an up-and-down gesturing motion at his body. “What’s all of this?” she repeated.

“Well, it would have been a little weird to go buy a bottle of champagne in my normal get-up, don’t you think?” he joked. “Plus, I figured as long as we’re celebrating, I might as well dress for the occasion.”

“Okay, I have so many questions.” she laughed. “But number one, how did you pay for this bottle? I’m no champagne buff, but I’m pretty sure bottles from this particular brand start at like \$100.”

“I uhh... I ate earlier.” he explained cautiously, watching her reaction. He wasn’t sure how she’d feel about him having selected his own prey, but the fact of the matter was that he had become quite famished over the past couple days, and didn’t yet understand Jack Kowalski enough to give him the death he deserved. He still didn’t know the specifics of Jack’s relationship to Beverly, but her intense reaction to seeing Jack told Pennywise that this was one hunt he should really try to *enjoy*.

“The guy had a good amount of cash on him.” he continued. “Meth dealer. A real piece of work, too. Very violent, constantly trying to get kids hooked, that kind of thing.”

“Oh. That makes sense.” she said cheerily, pleased that he was being so selective, even on his own time. Pennywise let go of the breath he’d been nervously holding in.

“How much cash did he have?” she asked in a hushed tone, as though it were a juicy piece of gossip.

“Why, you want some?” he whispered, mocking her tone with a playful smirk.

“Hey, if you’re offering!” she jabbed back. “No, I guess I’m just curious. I always hear about drug dealers having these big wads of cash, but I never really knew how much cash they *actually* carried.”

“Wellll...” he drawled, pulling a girthy rubber-band wrapped roll out of the interior pocket of his suit jacket and beginning to unfurl it. “Let’s take a look, shall we?”

Bev’s eyes widened, having never seen that much cash in real life. Sure, she made good money now, but the most *cash* she ever handled at once was a \$900, when she bought a clunker of a car from some guy on Craigslist right before starting graduate school.

Pennywise handed Beverly roughly half of the bills. “You count these, I’ll count the other half.”

They got to work, sipping on their champagne as they counted their piles. When they were finished, they compared numbers, finding that the total was just shy of \$4800. Pennywise’s “career” was quite lucrative. He had made roughly the same amount of money in a single afternoon that Beverly made in a full three weeks of work. In their hands, they held a full *four months* worth of rent on her new apartment... which was one of the most expensive one-bedroom apartments in all of Derry. She was amazed.

“So tell me about the apartment” he implored, and the strange timing made her momentarily wonder whether he had actual mind-reading abilities. “When do you move in?”

“They said I can move in as early as I want since nobody is living there right now, but I have to get all of my stuff from California. So we set the lease up to begin two weeks from today.” she explained, walking over to grab her phone so that she could show him the dozens of photos she’d taken of her new place, a spacious loft that occupied the top floor of one of downtown Derry’s historic red brick buildings.

After gushing over the photos for a few minutes, he asked the question that had been bugging him. “How long will you be gone? Isn’t California pretty far away?”

“It is. But I’ll be flying and paying a moving company to drive all of my stuff across the country, including my car, so I’ll only be gone for 3 or 4 days.” she explained, her upbeat tone doing little to soothe his growing anxiety.

"When are you leaving?" he asked, nervously tapping the countertop with his well-manicured pink hands.

"There's a flight out of Portland early Friday morning," she replied, choosing not to acknowledge his obvious shift in mood, "but I'd have to leave Derry Thursday night and stay in a hotel by the airport. So, about 48 hours from now, I suppose."

They sat in uncomfortable silence for a few minutes while he mulled over this news and she mulled over his reaction to it. Pennywise worried his bottom lip with his straight human teeth, as a nerve-wracking thought occurred to him - *What if she forgot about him when she left town? What if she left Derry and forgot all about their time together, her new apartment, everything? What if she never came back?* He was still lost in thought when she placed a hand over his.

"Penn... I have an idea." she began, chuckling at the confused look on his smooth features. "Come on; we're going out!"

Though she wasn't about to admit it to Pennywise, Beverly had also thought about the mysterious effects that leaving Derry had on her memory before, wondering if the same would apply now. She needed a tether to Pennywise while she was gone, not only to prevent herself from potentially forgetting about him, but also because even if the memory lapses weren't an issue anymore, she would miss him while she was away.

Luckily for both of them, there was an electronics store down the road from the Old Derry Inn, where Beverly figured they could find pay-as-you-go mobile phones. The fact that Pennywise didn't exactly have credit made a burner-phone perfect for their purposes.

Walking past a bakery storefront on the way, Beverly stopped suddenly. She had spotted their reflection in the glass window, coming to the strange realization that with Pennywise's human form dressed in a sharp suit standing next to her own off-white maxi dress, they looked an awful lot like a bride and groom. The ornately decorated display cakes visible on the counter inside certainly weren't helping. And damn... they looked incredible together.

Pennywise watched her curiously for a moment before turning to

look at the window, hoping to understand what had made her stop. “*Is she hungry?*” he thought, before realizing that her attention wasn’t directed at the items inside, but at their own image. And he could see exactly why.

Stepping toward her, his body angled toward the window, he put an arm around her shoulders and leaned down to kiss her on the temple while she watched the scene unfold on the glass. Her eyes fluttered closed and a contented smile ghosted across her lips before she suddenly snapped out of it and briskly walked away, not wanting to acknowledge the events that had just unfolded.

Making their way into the electronics store, Beverly made a beeline for the mobile phone section. She began to look over the models, picking each up and turning it around in her hand.

“A phone?” he asked from behind her. “I don’t know why I didn’t think of that.”

Twisting her head around to look at him, she just smiled and asked him if he’d ever used one before. He told her that he had not, so she turned her attention to a particularly simple, stripped-down model. She placed it in his hand and he held it perfectly still, gazing at it with suspicion as though it might explode at any minute.

Beverly just chuckled and grabbed its box, leading Pennywise to the check-out counter where they proceeded to load it up with \$100 worth of data - far more than enough to get them through a few days of her absence.

Walking out into the parking lot, softly lit by warm streetlights, Beverly unpacked Pennywise’s new phone and booted it up. He watched in silent awe as she input her contact information. She began to hand the phone to him, when he piped up.

“There’s a place to add a photo.” he said. “Let me get a photo of you.”

Beverly smiled bashfully, but backed herself up against a brick wall and fluffed her hair a bit. “Okay, let’s get this over with!” she joked. After a bit of fumbling, Pennywise snapped a beautiful photo of a

gorgeous young woman with wavy red hair, bright blue eyes, and a coy smile.

Since the pair was already dressed up, out on the town, and positively overflowing with cash, Beverly suggested they grab dinner at one of her favorite little spots. It was nothing overly fancy, but possessed a romantic, candlelit ambiance perfect for their celebrations.

They ate, they sipped fine wine, and they talked long into the evening, gazing lovingly into one another's eyes.

Neither noticed the professorly young man watching from a booth in the corner.

25. Reunion

Mike Hanlon had only returned to Derry a day prior, having left town to pursue a graduate degree in Library Science, followed by a fellowship that kept him buzzing amongst the storied stacks of great libraries throughout Western Europe. He was out to dinner with family, regaling them with tales of his travels, when he caught sight of a stunning redhead in his peripheral vision.

She looked an awful lot like a girl he knew in middle school - Beverly Marsh. But it couldn't be, could it? She had left Derry shortly after the events that had transpired that fateful summer, and he figured she would never return. He decided against approaching her and interrupting what appeared to be a romantic date - especially since he too was here with company - but he couldn't help but stare.

Something about her paramour caught his interest, too. He could only make out the profile of this mysterious figure, a tall and strikingly-handsome man with full lips, large eyes, and a distinctly-pointed nose. Something about him seemed eerily familiar to Mike, though. Could this also be a former classmate that Mike was having trouble placing?

Eventually the pair paid their bill and left, the tall man gently leading the woman Mike was now fairly certain was, in fact, Beverly Marsh out the door with his large hand on the small of her back. Again, something about this man's build, gait, and overall body language piqued Mike's interest, nagging at the back of his mind. This was going to bug him all night, he could already tell. Willing himself to focus on the dinner conversations to which he'd been half-heartedly nodding along, he powered through the rest of the meal before heading back to the library for some silent reflection.

Meanwhile, Beverly and Pennywise, completely unaware of Mike's presence in town, made their way back to the Old Derry Inn, first swinging by the DVD rental machine in the supermarket's vestibule to pick up a movie to watch while they finished off the remainder of their bottle of champagne and while Beverly began to get things in order for her trip.

It was a perfectly cozy kind of thing - sipping wine and watching a movie together - and Beverly adored that about their time together. She didn't have to guess his intentions, walk on eggshells, or put on an act for Pennywise, and she was fully aware of the irony. For the first time in her adult life, she truly trusted her partner and felt safe and comfy in their romantic relationship.

They eventually drifted off to sleep in one another's arms, and when morning rolled around, she asked him to stick around during her workday, knowing how much she'd miss him when she left for California, and still more than a little bit worried about what might happen to her memories while she was away. She needed him right then and there, to capitalize on what time they still had together before her flight.

Pennywise was happy to spend the day lazing about her hotel room, occasionally piping up to ask her for help in navigating his new phone or to share some interesting news from the local paper delivered to her doorstep. Knowing she normally didn't find time in her workday to eat lunch, he even busied himself preparing her something from the fridge - just reheated leftovers from last night, since he'd never cooked before, but when he placed the plate in front of her and watched her face light up, he made a mental note to himself to learn more about the culinary arts.

In between appointments and insurance paperwork, Beverly made final arrangements for her travel - scheduling her rental car return, making lunch plans with Tiffany, and beginning to pack up the items she wouldn't need to use until her flight.

"Do you want me to leave the hotel reservation open for you?" she asked Pennywise, looking up from her laptop. "You're welcome to hang out here until I return."

"No, that's okay." he assured her. "I have a home, you know. I'll be perfectly fine there. This room would feel too empty without you."

While she wasn't exactly crazy about the idea of him staying in the sewer again while she was away, she appreciated the few hundred bucks she'd save by checking out of the Old Derry Inn, and committed to setting it aside for something nice they could enjoy

together... as a couple. *"Gosh, it still feels weird to think of us in those terms."* she thought to herself, picking up the room's phone to call the front desk. *"But I like it."*

When 4:00 rolled around, Beverly received an email informing her that the check-in window for her flight had opened. Excited to check-in and ensure that she had a decent seat on her 6 hour flight back to LAX, she suggested they head to the one place in town she knew had a free printer on which she could print out her boarding pass - the library.

She closed down her computer as Pennywise shifted into his human form and conjured up a more casual outfit - a simple ensemble of blue jeans, sneakers, and a thin burgundy sweater that hugged his toned form in a way that made Beverly's knees go weak.

They quickly made their way to the library, where Pennywise wandered the stacks, curiously inspecting the books and glass cases of local artifacts, while Beverly sat down at a computer. She navigated to the airline's website and chose the best available seat before printing her boarding pass.

Standing at the slow, antiquated printer, she glanced around the room as she waited for it to spit out her piece of paper. Her eyes skimmed over the patrons, most of whom were either very old or very young, before her gaze froze in wide-eyed horror at a man behind the desk. She would have recognized him anywhere.

Quickly ripping her boarding pass from the printer before it had finished printing the footer, she ran off to search for Pennywise in the aisles, desperately hoping Mike Hanlon would not notice either of them.

"You have to go!" she frantically whispered, rushing up to Pennywise, who was currently engrossed in a children's pop-up book. "You can't be seen!"

"Bev, what are you talking about? I come out with you all the time." he said, chuckling lightly.

"Yeah, I know, but Penn... Mike is here! *MIKE!* I just saw him!" she

whispered urgently, willing the volume of her voice not to rise.

“Shit, are you serious?! What’s he doing here?!” Pennywise responded, quickly shoving the book back into place.

“I don’t know; I’ll find out. But he could recognize you, so get out of here fast!” she told him, and he nodded his agreement.

Pennywise quickly exited the library and contemplated whether he should return to the sewers or to Bev’s hotel room, settling on the latter as he was certain she’d want to discuss Mike’s return to Derry in a bit.

“Mike... Mike Hanlon?” Beverly asked tentatively, waving a slender hand to get his attention.

“Yes? Can I help you?” he said, not yet glancing up from his computer.

“You might not remember me. I know I had trouble remembering things from this far back, but you and I went to middle school together. I’m--”

“Beverly!” he excitedly finished for her, finally looking up from his screen. “I thought that was you! I saw you at that little restaurant down on 3rd Street last night, but I wasn’t 100% certain... ”

“Yep, it’s me! In the flesh.” she said, mentally cringing at her choice of words. “What are you doing here?”

“I work here. I’m the new head librarian.” he explained, pointing at the plaque on the wall behind him where his freshly-engraved name sat beneath countless other predecessors. “What are *you* doing here? I thought you left Derry after... you know...” he awkwardly trailed off.

“Oh, yeah. I did. But, uhh... my father died recently, so I had to come back and take care of things. And then I just kind of stuck around. I sort of met someone, so you know how it goes...” she explained, awkwardly fidgeting with a pen she’d found on the counter.

"Shit! Why did I say that?!" she thought to herself. *"No, no... that's good, actually. It's easier to be honest and just omit certain details."*

Mike's interest was piqued by her disclosure. *"The guy from the restaurant."* Mike remembered. *"I need to learn more about him."*

"But hey, congrats on the job!" Beverly continued, snapping him out of his train of thought. "I'm sure you'll really make a great addition to this place!"

"Thanks, Bev. Are you sticking around for a while? I'd love to catch up more, but unfortunately I have to close up shop here in a few minutes."

"Yeah, I actually signed a lease on an apartment recently, so I think it's safe to say I'll be around for a while." she laughed, excitement about catching up with an old friend warring with nervousness about him learning her darkest secret.

"I'm heading back to California tomorrow night - or at least to Portland to catch an early morning flight to California - so that I can pack up all of my stuff and ship it cross-country, though." she informed him. "So I won't be back in Derry until next week. I'd love to catch up when I return, though! I'll swing by next week and we'll set something up!"

"Sounds perfect." he told her. "I'm here every weekday."

She smiled and said her goodbyes, proud of herself for acting natural, before swiftly making her way back to the Old Derry Inn.

26. Admissions

She returned to find Pennywise nervously pacing the room, running one hand through his sandy brown locks while the other tapped against his full, pink lips. He was clearly unnerved.

“What happened?!” he asked urgently, spinning around to face her.

“Apparently he’s the new head librarian, which means he’s not going anywhere.” she said with a heavy sigh, an undercurrent of fear bubbling up to catch Pennywise’s attention.

“But he’s not going to recognize you like this... right?” she continued, obviously uncertain and attempting to comfort both of them.

“I don’t know, Bev... I look pretty similar to the clown, just without the makeup, don’t you think?” he said in a panicked tone, his hands motioning up and down his body.

“Shit, he’s right.” she thought to herself. “I noticed that immediately. Granted, I had spent more time looking closely at the clown’s face, but Mike is bound to notice eventually.”

“I could maybe change how my human form looks, but it would take a lot more energy and--” he began, before Beverly interrupted him with a fateful sentence.

“He’s already seen you like this.”

She explained that he had apparently been at the restaurant the other night, so he had undoubtedly gotten a good look at Pennywise’s human form. If anything, it’d arouse more suspicion if he were to switch the look up now.

Pennywise threw himself onto the sofa dramatically, elbows propped on his jean-clad legs and head falling down to rest in his large, slender hands.

“What are we going to do, Bev?” he mumbled.

She sat down beside him and wrapped an arm around his muscular

back, resting her head on his shoulder. "I don't know, babe. We'll figure it out." she told him.

"*Babe?*" he asked, picking his head up to look at her.

"Oh, uhh... it just kind of slipped out." she explained. "Would you prefer it if I called you something different?"

"No, I like it. It's what you called me when the pizza boy came by the first night we were here together." he reminded her, drawing a blush to her cheeks. "It's perfect. It's perfect, *babe*."

Beverly kissed him on the forehead and drew his head to her chest, rocking him gently and silently relishing the opportunity to be the one doing the comforting instead of the one in need of being comforted.

"I can't lose you." he mumbled into her chest, echoing her own words from the other night.

"Hey, look at me." she said gently. He lifted his head, worried green eyes meeting her own tender blue gaze. "You're not going to lose me. I'm never going to let that happen."

He began to argue, but she placed a small hand over his mouth so that she could continue. "I'm never going to let that happen, and do you know why, Penn?"

He shook his head slowly from side to side, wide eyes never leaving hers.

"Because I love you, Penn." she whispered. "I love you. And that's the most powerful thing in the world."

He released a shaky breath onto her hand and closed his eyes, wanting to commit everything about this moment to memory.

Beverly hadn't actually planned on saying those words so soon, but in her panic over realizing that Mike Hanlon had returned to Derry and the implications that could have with her relationship with Pennywise, she couldn't deny it any longer. She loved him. She loved

him more than she'd ever loved anyone. And she was going to protect him if it killed her... though hopefully it wouldn't get to that point.

Pennywise's eyes were still closed when she leaned forward to place a gentle kiss on his lips. "Change back. I want to see your *real* face." she whispered.

He cracked one eye open and eyed her nervously, not quite sure how to articulate what he was about to say, but needing to be honest with her now that the topic had come up yet again. "Umm... Bev... I hate to ruin the mood here, but I need to clear something up... the clown is not actually my 'real face', as you put it."

She sat back, looking at him with unfettered confusion. "Uhh... what?" she asked, making a waving motion with her hand as if to say '*explain yourself*'.

"Yeah, uhh... Pennywise isn't my real name, as you already know. He's also not my true form. He's just... my favorite."

She said nothing, just stared at him with a blank facial expression, which he took as a sign to continue his explanation. "This face I'm wearing right now, this human form? It's what Pennywise looked like out of the makeup. He was a real clown. I... I claimed him as my own a long time ago."

Beverly opened and closed her mouth repeatedly, like a fish out of water, trying to find words. She finally settled on, "So you're... *wearing*... a dead man?"

He nodded slowly, afraid of what might come out of her mouth next. An admonishment? A declaration of how much he disgusted her?

Instead, she simply asked "So then what do you actually look like?"

"Bev..." he began in a cautionary tone, wanting to warn her against going down this road, but she held up a hand to stop him.

"Penn, you brought this up. If we're going to be partners - if we're going to *build a life together* - I feel like I should know who you really are. Don't you think?" she explained to him. He couldn't exactly argue with the sentiment, though he liked to think she'd already

learned who he really was, despite not knowing his appearance. Still, he understood that humans were visual creatures who placed real value in that sort of thing, even if appearance wasn't the primary reason they cared for one another.

"Okay, okay..." he acquiesced. "It's a little tough to explain, but I'll do my best."

She put on her best supportive-girlfriend face. "Can't you just show me?" she asked cheerily. "Wouldn't that be simpler?"

"No, not exactly." he began, a coy smile ghosting across his lips. "Although you've actually seen my true form before."

Chuckling lightly at her face - a comical mix of confusion, disbelief, and interest - he continued on. "You wouldn't remember. Humans... humans can't see me in my true form and remain consciously aware of the fact that they're seeing me. It... puts them in a trance."

A look of dawning realization crossed Beverly's features at his admission, remembering that she had been somehow hypnotized when she was captured by him 15 years prior. She couldn't remember *how* she had become hypnotized, but she supposed he was about to explain.

"My true form," he explained, "is... light. Or, rather, lights. Plural. Just warm balls of light that kind of... swirl around one another."

He paused, analyzing Beverly's reaction to this information. Her face was completely devoid of any expression, positive or negative. Completely neutral. Completely blank. He waved a hand in front of her face after a moment. "Bev... babe? I know it's... different. But, umm... I don't really know how else to explain it."

"It's..." she began, breaking her silence. "It's... It's..."

Pennywise wrung his hands nervously, terrified of how she would complete her sentence.

"It's beautiful, Penn. It's really beautiful. It suits you. Warm light. I love it... even if I can't see it." she explained. "It actually sounds a lot

like the human concept of souls. This is obviously my body,” she continued, motioning toward herself with her hands, “but I don’t really think of this as who I am... it’s just a transportation vessel made of flesh and bones and blood. I know that my ‘true form’ doesn’t exist as balls of light, but I don’t think it’s too far off.”

Pennywise was amazed. He’d never considered humans as separate from their bodies, but then again he’d never truly gotten to know a human before Bev. And now that she explained it, it made perfect sense to him. “*God, she’s incredible.*” he thought to himself, smiling warmly at her.

Not only that, but he was truly touched by her acceptance of him. Acutely aware of the strangeness of their interspecies relationship, he wouldn’t have faulted her for wanting out at any point in time. But she stuck by him, and... “*I don’t deserve her*” was the only thought that filled his mind. His happiness gave way to intense guilt and self-loathing, and in spirit of laying it all on the table, he decided to give her another opportunity for an out in the form of a self-deprecating - but honest - joke.

“If you think that’s beautiful, just wait until you find out my true form *on Earth*.” he said with an unamused smile, not quite meeting her eyes.

Beverly noticed his huge shift in mood, and nervously asked what he meant.

“Oh, it’s no big deal.” he said sarcastically. “I’m just a giant spider-type thing when I’m on my own. Hence all the webbing at my place.”

Finally looking up at her face, he was unsurprised to find a look of horror. She opened her mouth to say something, and he was certain it wouldn’t end well for him. Instead, what she said was something he never would have anticipated. Still wearing a thinly-veiled look of alarm, she simply said “Yeah, let’s maybe just stick with the clown... I still love you, though.”

Pennywise smiled widely at her, leaning forward to capture her lips in a passionate kiss. “I love you too... *babe*.” he whispered against her lips.

27. Goodbyes

Notes for the Chapter:

FINALLY got a chance to update! Hopefully work will be a bit calmer over the next few weeks, so updates will come more frequently :)

Beverly leaned forward to deepen the kiss, allowing her tongue to dance against his sensually. When she pulled back for air after a moment, she cracked her eyes open to find the clown before her once more. The corners of her lips quirked into a wistful smile as she brought her hand up to allow her thumb to glide over his glossy, soft bottom lip. Even if this wasn't actually his true form, she'd always think of the clown first and foremost as the face of the man she loved.

He sighed softly as she continued her gentle exploration of his features, opening his eyes a sliver to watch every changing emotion flicker across her face like sunlight reflecting off choppy water. He loved her completely, through all her murky depths.

Their mouths met once more, charged with desperation, joy, sadness, and desire that each could taste as much as feel. Hooking an arm around her lower back, Pennywise carefully lowered her down onto the sofa, repositioning his own body to hover over hers, never breaking their kiss.

Reaching for the ribbon she'd seen him uncover once before, Beverly untied his collar and guided it to the floor beneath them before moving on to slowly unfasten the remainder of his upper costume. Sitting up on his knees, Pennywise slipped the silk item off his stark-white shoulders, letting it fall gracefully to the floor before beginning to undress Beverly as she frantically worked to unfasten his pants.

He quickly stripped her of her clothing and entered her with the kind of desperation that he felt the other night - a deep, primal need to prove his love, and to receive hers in return. He kissed her deeply, settling his body down as close to hers as possible as he ground into her sensually.

Beverly moaned into his mouth until she absolutely had to break away for air, at which point she turned her attention to his neck and jawline, covering it with open-mouthed kisses, licks, and gentle bites while he hissed and growled appreciatively above her.

Grabbing her by the waist, Pennywise pulled her up in a smooth motion, repositioning them so that she could straddle him on the sofa. He captured a hard nipple in his mouth and swirled his tongue slowly around it as he looked up at her through dark lashes, eyes wide and full of love.

Beverly established a leisurely rhythm as she rode him, Pennywise's hands roaming her body as though he wanted to memorize every inch. She began to do the same, smoothing her flat palms over the unmarred white skin of his chest and shoulders, then up and around his neck to wind in his hair. She tugged the orange fibers lightly, causing him to buck up into her in appreciation, letting out a moan muffled by her flesh in his mouth. Beverly gasped and threw her head back, prompting Pennywise to take control of the situation.

His hands shot to her hips and he bucked upward again and again, slowly and deeply, filling every inch of her with every inch of himself. She quivered and moaned on his lap, head still thrown back. Grabbing her by the back of the head, he forced her eyes to his as he continued to grind into her, never breaking intense eye contact.

Beverly felt herself rapidly approaching the edge under the intensity of his stare. When his hand moved gently from the back of her neck to the front, holding her by the throat as he thrust up into her, she quickly came unraveled, screaming into the hotel room that had become their first home together, walls clamping down on him hard until he couldn't hold out any longer. With a deep, shaky exhale, he released himself into her, warm bursts of liquid filling her depths.

He pulled her forward into a hug, lightly stroking her back. "I love you" he whispered into her hair.

"I love you" she responded instantly, voice cracking.

As he held her, he began to sense an uncomfortable mix of emotions rolling off her skin. Strong top-notes of sadness mixed with a growing

base of fear caused him to grab her gently by the shoulders, moving her body back so he could look her over in worry, brows furrowed and eyes darting all over her face.

“Fear.” he stated simply, reminiscent of a time long past. “Why?”

Tears spilled from her eyes at last, and she brought her hands up to allow her thumbs to coast back and forth along his cheeks. “What if the phone thing doesn't work? What if my memories go away again when I go back to California? What if I... what if I *forget* you?” she whispered.

He looked at her with a serious, determined expression on his painted features. “Then I'll find you. I'll break through the void.” he told her. “I'll lure you back here somehow, and you'll remember.”

She nodded an acceptance of his belief that this was possible, though she wasn't totally certain just yet.

“Bev. Babe.” he continued. “Nothing's ever going to keep us apart if you don't want us to be. If one day you decide you no longer want to be with me, I won't do anything to prevent you from leaving. But if you're telling me right now that when you leave Derry tonight, you have every intention of returning, I *will* find you and bring you home if you don't return on your own.”

Beverly felt goosebumps threatening to erupt hearing him discuss his own power and determination. Never had she felt so protected, and there was something hugely empowering about having made an ancient, magical entity fall so deeply in love with her - a normal human. She leaned forward to place kisses all over his painted face, hearing a light chuckle in response.

Tucking her head into the space between his head and shoulder, she simply let herself be held by him until she absolutely had to get up and ready herself for her travels. One last time, they hopped into the hotel shower together and rinsed away the evidence of their lovemaking. Beverly then tossed on a clean set of clothing and made her final rounds in the hotel room, checking for anything she may have forgotten to pack.

They left the hotel room together, never to return. As the door clicked behind them, she paused to stare at it for a moment before rapidly turning and flinging herself into Pennywise's arms. "I love you so much." she whispered shakily.

"Call me as soon as you make it to Portland." he told her, the words slightly muffled by her hair.

She nodded, then pulled back to look at him with a serious expression as she added "*You* call *me* if I don't call you by 10:00. That's more than enough time for me to get there and check in to the hotel."

Pennywise felt a growing ache in his chest as he watched Beverly get into her rental car and leave the hotel parking lot, her taillights fading gradually as she drove away. By the time he left it himself, he wasn't sure quite how long he'd stood there staring blankly ahead at the main road. He meanderingly made his way back to his underground castle, feeling as though the next two or three hours would be the longest of his entire existence.

28. Separation

Back at the circus cart, Pennywise paced nervously for a while before throwing himself down upon the mattress with a heavy sigh, staring blankly upward. Grabbing a stuffed toy beside him, he tossed it at the ceiling over and over again, letting it bounce off the wood and fall back into his large hand. He eventually turned his attention to the toy itself, looking it over and trying to remember its source.

Though faded from years of exposure to sewer water, he recalled that it was once a stuffed monkey with blue buttons for eyes and a yellow bowtie around its neck. It belonged to a little girl named Sally. He remembered that her friends and family called her 'Silly Sally'. That's how he tricked her into trusting him - by addressing her as such. Remembering this little fact made his heart pang in a way that made him physically and mentally uncomfortable. *Beverly*. She'd *changed* him.

He turned his focus inward, trying to decide how he felt about this realization. He hadn't eaten any children since waking, which was obviously his favorite pastime for centuries before Beverly came along. *"Am I just holding back for her?"* he wondered. *"If a child walked in here right now, would I want to eat it, but have to stop myself on her account?"*

He mulled it over for a few minutes before he decided that the answer was... *no*. He honestly had no desire to eat children at this point. He even felt a foreign, deeply unnerving emotion when he thought back on his past actions. It made his face feel hot and chest feel tight. Very strange, indeed.

Lost in thought, he flinched in surprise when his phone began ringing, the photo he took of the pretty redhead popping up on its screen.

"Bev?!" he said, answering it quickly.

There was silence on the other end for a moment, before a small, uncertain voice came through. "Umm... who is this?" she asked.

"Wh... what?" he responded, heart sinking and smile disappearing. "Bev, you called *me*... you know who I am, right?!"

She could hear the panic in his voice, and suddenly felt terrible. "Penn, I'm kidding. I'm just fucking with you." she assured him, hearing a loud sigh of relief through the receiver. "I made it to Portland and checked into the hotel, and I've had absolutely zero weird memory lapses so far!" she explained excitedly.

"Babe, that's amazing!" he exclaimed, a huge grin stretched across his painted features. "However..." he began, voice deepening to a mischievous tone, "you know I'm going to have to *punish you* for that joke when you return."

She felt a spike of arousal at his words, and a blush rose to her cheeks, but she was desperate to change the subject simply because she didn't want their separation to be even more difficult. It was hard enough to miss his company. Adding on the layer of constantly thinking about how much she missed their *playtime* just made it harder.

"I'd expect nothing less." she stated simply, before continuing on to duller topics - primarily her travel schedule.

After about half an hour on the phone, Pennywise noticed Beverly yawning through her words. "You should get some sleep." he told her. She agreed, but didn't want to hang up just yet.

"Will you stay on the line with me until I fall asleep?" she asked, voice carrying a bashful tone. "I know that's kind of a weird thing to do, but I don't like falling asleep without you there anymore."

He reassured her that he didn't find it weird at all; that he also didn't like having to fall asleep without her there, curled up beside him. They each laid down and closed their eyes, pretending the other was right there next to them in bed as they sleepily exchanged accounts of their love and their sadness about having to be apart for these few days.

"I can't wait to be there with you again." she told him, glad he couldn't smell her worry through the telephone. Was Portland simply

too close to Derry for the memory lapses to be a problem? When she got on the plane in the morning and flew 3000 miles across the country, would she forget him, despite it not having been a problem just yet?

They drowsily chatted for a few more minutes until Pennywise heard light snoring through the receiver and decided she'd fallen asleep. He hung up and quickly drifted off himself, feeling as though barely any time had passed before his phone rang once again, awaking him from his slumber.

"Good morning, beautiful," he answered, the groggy morning voice she so adored causing a fluttering feeling in Beverly's chest.

"Good morning, handsome," she replied in kind as she poured water into her hotel coffee maker, a light chuckle in her voice. "How did you sleep?"

"Definitely not as comfortably as when I have you curled up in my arms," he told her, "but I managed."

Beverly put him on speakerphone as she went about her morning routine, wanting to squeeze in as much conversation with him as possible before her flight. She told him all about Portland, with its fishmongers and red brick buildings and cobblestone streets.

Pennywise hung on every word, feeling a growing desire to get out and see the rest of this planet on which he'd now lived for centuries. He'd never given much thought to things outside of Derry, but hearing Beverly wax poetic about other Earthly locations made him wonder if there was a way to break out of Derry's confines to explore with her.

"Do you have plans tonight?" she asked him, interrupting his train of thought.

He told her that he was probably going to try to go out with Jack Kowalski. He'd need to feed again soon, and perhaps he could get closer to understanding Jack's fears if he capitalized on Bev's time away to spend some time... *socializing*.

"I hope you don't think you're going to be doing a lot of *entertaining* at our place once we get moved in." she said with a laugh.

"... *Our* place?" he asked. "Once *we* get moved in?"

"Oh... oh, shit." she responded in a rush. "I just assumed. I'm sorry. That was stupid of me. I realize I haven't... we haven't..." she stammered, before taking a deep breath and collecting her thoughts.

"Penn, do you want to move into the loft with me? I would like you to, but only if you want to." she stated, nervously awaiting his reply.

"Beverly Marsh, I would be honored to move in with you." he told her. "But... I don't know if your place is big enough to fit all of my stuff. The toys, the cart..." he trailed off.

Beverly's face fell, not having thought about this and not really wanting to have to think about it. When nothing but awkward silence made its way through Pennywise's receiver, he eventually gave up the gag.

"I'm just fucking with you, babe. I had to pay you back for last night." he laughed.

"Oh, thank god!" she exclaimed, breathing a massive sigh of relief. "That was not a conversation I was excited about having to have with you."

Pulling up to the airport rental car return, Beverly realized that she'd reached the point in her morning at which she really couldn't stay on the line any longer. She needed to return her car, check her baggage, make her way through security, and then get on what would surely prove to be the longest, most nerve-wracking flight of her life.

"My flight takes off in an hour, and it's just under 6 hours long." she told him. "If I don't call you in 7 hours, call me."

"Bev, I... I'm scared." he told her, voice sounding small in this rare moment of vulnerability.

"Me too, Penn. But I have faith in you to find me if anything bad happens." she said, attempting to comfort both of them at the same

time. “I love you so much. We’re going to build a beautiful life together, in *our* loft, and it’s going to be amazing.”

He told her how much he loved her before hanging up and preparing to spend 7 miserable hours in waiting. At least he could make plans with Jack. That would occupy at least, what? 5 minutes? “*Fuck.*”

Notes for the Chapter:

FYI: updates will be a bit slower going forward, as chapters aren't fully fleshed out yet... but I do have outlines! I'm hoping to get the next chapter (possibly even two chapters) up by Friday, 11/8. After that, I'll be on a business trip for about 10 days, but I imagine I'll have some downtime for writing :)

29. Inebriation

It had been 7 hours since Pennywise last heard from Beverly. He was beginning to worry. Picking up the phone, he dialed her number, only to be immediately sent to voicemail.

“Please leave a message after the tone.” the robotic voice said. *“Beeeeeeep.”*

“Umm... Bev, it’s uhh... it’s me. Give me a call when you get this. I... I love you.” he said into the phone, voice wavering.

Fifteen more minutes passed without a peep. And then twenty. Twenty-five.

He paced the circus cart frantically, having tried calling her a second time only to be sent to voicemail again. He tugged his orange tufts as he paced, mumbling comforting affirmations to himself. It didn’t help.

Eight hours had now gone by without a word from Beverly. He called again. Nothing.

Right as he was about to resign himself to the fact that Beverly was gone, never to return, having surely forgotten about him, his phone rang. His eyes misted over as he saw her photo pop up on the screen.

“H-hello?” he answered, voice cracking.

“Penn! Babe! Oh my god, I’m so sorry!” she exclaimed. “My flight got rerouted due to a storm over the Rockies. We just landed. I feel terrible. Buuuuut... I remember everything!”

“That’s amazing, babe!” he said, unable to keep the gleeful laughter out of his voice. “I was so scared...”

“I know, me too!” she continued. “I love you so much, Penn.”

She told him all about how much she already missed him, and how relieved she was to be in California with her memories still intact before letting him know that she needed to hang up to catch a cab

back to her condo, let the movers in to start packing up her belongings, and meet up with Tiffany for drinks at one of their favorite local cocktail bars.

“I’ll try to be quick about it so we can talk again in a few hours.” she told him.

Pennywise urged her not to rush and to instead enjoy her time out with Tiffany - he was heading out with Jack Kowalski tonight, after all. “I’ll call you when I’m done with him.” he told her. “I love you, Bev.”

She hung up the phone, a stupid grin on her face as she hailed a cab. She might have been the only person at LAX smiling at that moment, but even the notoriously awful airport couldn’t put a damper on her mood.

Two hours later, Beverly had made it to her condo where she showered, tossed on a favorite outfit, and let the movers in before meeting up with Tiffany. They grabbed an open two-top table near a large street-adjacent window, ordered a few cocktails, and began to catch up.

The first question out of Tiffany’s mouth was predictable - she wanted to know *why on Earth* Beverly was moving from sunny Santa Monica back to the podunk Maine town in which she grew up. A valid inquiry.

She told her all about her father’s death and ensuing hospital and funeral bills, noting that she needed to save some money and that the cost of living in Derry was quite low.

“Okay, but still...” Tiffany began, “Derry, Maine? I mean, Beverly... couldn’t you have just gotten a roommate or moved to Long Beach or something?”

Beverly blushed and began to tear apart a napkin.

“Oh, I know *that* look.” Tiffany continued. “You met someone. Out with it, Beverly! Tell me all about him! What’s his name?”

“Penn.” Beverly mumbled out without thinking it through, still looking down at the napkin shards in her hand.

“*Penn?*” Tiffany asked, a confused look on her face. “What kind of name is that?”

“Oh, uh... his name’s Robert, actually.” Beverly backpedaled. “I just call him Penn. It’s... it’s kind of an inside joke.”

Tiffany rested her pointed chin on her hand, leaning forward over the small table, big brown eyes intently focused on Beverly’s blushing face. “Sooooo...” she said “What’s he like?”

“He’s incredible, Tiff. He’s smart and kind and funny and he treats me so well. I’m sure I don’t have to remind you how different that is from my past experiences.” she explained, a wistful smile settling over her mouth.

“Yeah, yeah, that sounds great. Is he hot? How’s the sex?” Tiffany joked.

“Oh. My. GOD. Tiff. It’s *mindblowing*.” Beverly explained, smile replaced by a serious expression as she mirrored Tiffany’s body language and leaned across the table. “Really, really incredible. And he’s insanely hot. Tall, toned, piercing eyes, full lips. Tiff, I can hardly keep my hands off him.”

“Beverly, this does not sound like a real person.” Tiffany jabbed, chuckling as she took a sip of her martini.

Choosing to ignore Tiffany’s all-too-accurate choice of words, she simply pulled out her phone to show a photo she’d taken of Pennywise in his human form, all dressed up the night they purchased his phone.

Tiffany’s jaw literally dropped upon seeing it. “Holy shit, Beverly.” she said. “You found *that* in Derry, Maine?! What does he even do there?”

“*Fuck. What DOES he do?*” Beverly thought to herself in a panic. “*I’m going to need an answer to that question. Especially before meeting up with Mike.*”

“Uhh... it’s a bit tough to explain,” she began, quickly thinking up a vague response, “but he’s self-employed and works from home... just like me!”

This answer seemed to satisfy Tiffany, and Beverly breathed a quiet sigh of relief.

By the time she had downed her third cocktail, Beverly figured it was time to head back to the condo, sharing pertinent information about the lease terms with Tiffany before bidding her farewell.

Walking through the dimly lit streets, lined with palms swaying gently in the breeze, Beverly reflected on the crazy, lucky turn of events that had led her to this point in her life. The heady mixture of warm, salty air, distant street musicians, a little bit too much alcohol, and the high of having spent the evening bragging about Pennywise left her feeling empowered, intoxicated... *horny*. So very *horny*. Damn.

Making her way up the stairs and into a condo she’d likely never see again after this weekend, she beelined for her dresser, digging through the top drawer to find a lacy red lingerie set she’d purchased to wear for a long-past lover, but never got the chance, having learned of his infidelity shortly thereafter. If anyone deserved to see her in it, it was Pennywise.

Tossing it on, along with some matching red lipstick, she fluffed her hair in the mirror and tested out a few poses before snapping a handful of provocative selfies and sending them his way.

Her phone rang instantly.

30. Fantasy

Notes for the Chapter:

TW/CW: non-consensual imagery.

If you're not down with that kind of thing, feel free to skip this chapter. You'll be fine to read the rest of the story without it.

If you ARE down with that kind of thing, buckle in, kids!

“Beverly Marsh...” growled the voice on the other end. “You are a very naughty girl.”

Beverly felt her lacy red thong become immediately soaked. “Is this a good time?” she asked, her smooth, seductive tone stoking the fire beginning to grow in the pit of Pennywise’s stomach.

“Just finished up with Jack.” he replied. “And I must say, those photos are quite the dessert.”

“You... ate?” she asked awkwardly.

“Not him. Just some burgers at the bar.” he explained. “But soon. *Soon.*” the last word coming out as a low, animalistic snarl that further fueled Beverly’s arousal.

“Ah, I see. Tell me, Penn...” she began, wanting to capitalize on the feral nature he was displaying tonight. “All those times you were dreaming of coming face-to-face with me again over the past 15 years...” Beverly began, “did you ever think of doing things other than eating me?”

He chuckled darkly. “Once or twice.”

“Tell me about it.” she whispered sultrily, shifting to lie down in a more comfortable position on her bed and closing her eyes.

“Oh, I don’t know, Bev...” he teased. “Do you think you’ve earned

this little bedtime story?”

She didn't know how it was even possible at this point, but she felt herself become even wetter as soon as the words left his mouth. “Mmhm.” she hummed. “I paid in advance with those photos.”

“Wellllll...” Pennywise began. “I had woken up, which of course brought you back to Derry. No doubt looking to kill me. I can't quite blame you; I was looking to kill you, too.”

She let out a small huff of amusement as he continued on.

“You came down into the sewers alone looking for me. I guess my dreams weren't too far off from reality, huh?” he recounted, genuinely impressed by his accurate assessment of her in his own past dreams.

“I'm not sure what you were expecting when you ventured into my home, but once you saw me, I suppose you realized how foolish you had been.” he continued, voice becoming darker and more sinister. “You turned to run, but you were too slow. I caught you.”

He heard Beverly let out a shaky breath.

“I grabbed you by that pretty little throat of yours and hauled you back to the cart.” he continued, but then paused, realizing the story was about to become much more intense. He wasn't sure whether he should continue, now feeling some degree of shame about his past fantasies, given the nature of their current relationship.

His thoughts were interrupted by her sultry voice - “And then?” she pressed.

“Oh, I was hungry, Bev. Hungry for *you*. I'd been waiting for this moment for so long.” he growled. “But I couldn't just make it quick for you. I tried to think up ways to torture you; to make your death extra satisfying... but as I was looking you over, trying to figure out what I would do to you first, I realized something.”

“What did you realize?” she asked breathily, hand winding its way down to begin slowly circling her clit.

“How *delicious* you looked... in a different sense.” Pennywise whispered. “How nicely you’d grown into that body that would soon be in my stomach. It would have been a shame to waste such pretty plating. You weren’t exactly fast food.”

He paused for a moment, adjusting his own posture so he could more comfortably reach his own quickly hardening member. Wrapping his gloved hand around it, he caressed it slowly up and down.

“I considered showing you the lights.” he continued. “But I decided I wouldn’t let you off that easily. I wanted you to be conscious for everything I did to you. All the ways I punished you for your past transgressions.”

“Fuck, Penn...” she moaned into the phone, rubbing herself more vigorously. “Tell me.”

“I chained you to the wall with my webbing, but only by your neck.” he explained. “I wanted to make sure your arms and legs were free so you could attempt to put up a fight. More fun that way.”

“Well, you certainly did put up a fight. You were like a caged animal, swinging and scratching at me.” he laughed.

“But...” he continued, voice becoming low and dark again. “It was no use. I backed you into a corner and grabbed both of those angry little hands in one of mine, pinning them to the wall above your head.”

She moaned again, a sound which spurred Pennywise on. He began to pump his hand up and down faster, leaning into the darkness of his fantasy.

“I needed a little taste, Bev.” he continued. “Fuck, I wanted to know how you tasted more than I’d ever wanted anything. I *craved* you.”

Pennywise realized that he was drooling heavily at this point, reminiscing on the next portion of his dream. “I stepped forward until I was pressed up against you, beginning to kiss my way down your neck.”

“How romantic.” Beverly joked, but Pennywise could hear the effects of his storytelling in her breathy tone.

“You seemed to think so.” he laughed. “Your body began to react, pressing into me ever-so-slightly. A human male might not even notice such a tiny movement, but what can I say? I’m... a bit more advanced.”

“Once I made it to that soft little spot where your neck meets your shoulder, I took a small bite. Just enough to get a taste of your blood. Not enough to truly do damage... yet.” he explained, the last word a deep growl — an ominous foreshadowing of the turn this story was beginning to take.

Beverly gasped into the phone as her hand began to move quicker.

The sound caused him to release a noise of his own — something between a growl and a moan. “You like this, don’t you, you depraved little slut?” he taunted.

“Fuck. Yes.” she panted. “Don’t stop, Penn.”

“Once I’d lapped up enough of your blood to satisfy me for the time being, I ripped your body away from the wall and threw you onto your stomach on the mattress.” Pennywise continued, feeling drunk on a delicious cocktail of arousal, darkness, and the confidence of knowing how wet his words made Beverly.

“Grabbing your wrists in my hand again, I wedged myself between your bare legs — you were wearing a dress, for some reason.” he interjected with a baleful chuckle. “Not very practical, but anyway — I wedged myself between your bare legs and pressed my hard cock against that tight little ass, covered only by a flimsy scrap of white cotton.”

Her pants and moans were growing louder and more frequent, and he smirked to himself as he rubbed his painfully erect member.

“I ripped right through that cotton, leaving bloody red marks in my wake.” he snarled. “You tried to hide it, Bev, but you *liked* what I was doing to you. Your body told me all I needed to know. You pressed your ass back into me, practically begging me to fill you. And by the time I shoved my cock in that hot little cunt, you were so wet that it slipped right in.”

“Fuck, Penn!” she hissed, feeling herself become even wetter, if it were at all possible.

“Oh, I could hear you trying to hide your little gasps and moans, too. I could see you biting into a pillow to try to keep it a secret. I couldn’t let that happen.” he explained.

“I moved closer to you, lowering my body down so that my chest was against your back, my face close to yours so I could hear all your little noises. I could tell you hated that you were making them. Hated how I was making you feel. But I could see it on your face. I could feel it in how wet you were. I could smell your arousal... and I could smell how much you hated yourself for it. God, you smelled fucking delicious.”

He let out a small huff of amusement before continuing.

“At one point, I stopped thrusting into you to see what you would do. Do you know what you did, Bev?” he teased.

“What?” she asked breathlessly.

“*You* started to fuck *me*. You pushed back against me, taking me all the way inside you over and over again, still trying to hide your moans. At this point, I was done trying to let you. I grabbed you by the hair and lifted your head up so you couldn’t muffle your sounds in the blankets any longer. And then...” he paused, taking immense pleasure in teasing her.

“And then?” she panted, desperate for him to continue.

“And then I kissed you. Hard and fast and messy. And you kissed me back. You hated yourself for it, but you couldn’t help it. That was it for you. You came all over my cock, screaming into my mouth.” he finished in a menacing growl.

Pennywise heard the loudest moan yet through the phone.

“Are you going to cum all over Pennywise’s cock, you filthy little girl?” he taunted in the strange, eerie tone she remembered from childhood.

"I'm so close!" she panted.

"Do it." he demanded, voice low and rough once again. "Cum for me, Bev. Cum for your *monster*."

Beverly turned her head to bite into a pillow in hopes that it would muffle the loud scream currently erupting from her throat as she came hard, pulsing around her fingers. It was the most erotic sound Pennywise had ever heard, and it brought him close to the edge, letting out growls and moans of his own in quick succession.

Beverly continued coaxing out her final aftershocks and, upon realizing how close he was to his own goal, removed the pillow from her mouth to breathlessly pant, "I wish I could feel you cum inside me right now, Penn. I want it so bad."

He came with a roar before fully collapsing down onto the mattress and taking almost a full minute to catch his breath.

"What happened after that?" she asked, once they had both recovered.

"I ate you, of course." he responded, voice still carrying a sinister timbre. "*Slowly*."

"Is it weird that I find that insanely hot?" she asked, chuckling in embarrassment. "I mean, I obviously don't want you to ever actually eat me, but just knowing that you *can*... I think we can work with that concept somehow going forward. And we're definitely doing the whole 'chain me to the wall' thing."

"You're a strange one, Beverly Marsh" he told her with a wide, adoring smile she couldn't see, but could hear. "I wouldn't want it any other way."

31. Suspicion

Things had been slower than Mike anticipated at the Derry Public Library. He should have known that things in this small Maine community would be pretty uneventful compared to his experiences working in the grand, bustling libraries of cities like Budapest and Seville, but he would have assumed that being the head librarian would tack on some time-consuming tasks he wasn't expected to perform as an assistant in those spots.

It did not. He was bored.

For the past several days, he had spent large chunks of his workday trying to invent work to do, since none was coming on its own. He had removed all of the books from the stacks in order to clean the shelves, put together a grant application for a summer reading program - the first of its kind in Derry, and quickly sped through all manner of other projects he technically didn't need to begin worrying about for another few months.

Pacing the aisles mindlessly, his eye was drawn to a gold-spined book slightly ajar from the rest of the stack. He lifted his finger to poke it back in place, when he realized what it was — his old middle school yearbook. Gently sliding it the rest of the way out, he flipped through until he found the photos of his childhood friends.

Denbrough, Bill.

Hanlon, Mike. — *“God, I look young.”*

Hanscom, Ben.

Kaspbrak, Eddie.

Marsh, Beverly.

“Ah, right.” he thought to himself. *“Beverly should be back any day now.”*

They had a lot to catch up on, he supposed. A thought occurred to him that made him genuinely excited — he could fill his empty

workdays by brushing up on the events of their childhood and trying to make sense of things prior to her return. While he wasn't sure she'd want to rehash things, he knew it would at least be beneficial to him to try to wrap his head around what had occurred.

Remembering that Ben had already done a lot of this background research as a middle schooler, relying almost entirely on books he found in the very library Mike now occupied, he made a beeline for the town history section.

Pulling out several old books, he began to flip through them behind the front desk, looking up only occasionally to help answer a question, scan a book, or set up a new library card. He made notes as he went along, placing color-coded post-its on pages he knew he'd want to reference later — perhaps with Beverly.

About an hour and a half into his detective work, a strange thing caught his eye. Hidden in a grainy photo taken in the late 50s was a man who bore a strong resemblance to Beverly's boyfriend. Odd, he thought, but perhaps it was his grandfather. After all, Mike bore a strong resemblance to his own grandfather.

Putting it out of his mind, he began to flip through a book covering the history of Colonial Derry. He froze upon noticing an artist rendition of the crowd during a Witch Trial. There was that face again. This was far too eerie to be a coincidence — how many people looked exactly like their great, great, great grandfather?

As logical as he was, Mike didn't want to jump to any conclusions, but he felt a knot in the pit of his stomach that he just couldn't ignore. Looking up at the clock, he noticed that the library would be closing in 12 minutes. He began to close up shop, and as soon as the clock hit closing time, he was out the door, locking it behind him.

He quickly made his way to a rocky section of the Kenduskeag Stream he'd not seen since middle school, to a sewer outlet he hoped he'd never see again. Determined to show himself that there was nothing to worry about, he ran through the greywater, paying no mind to the damage it was doing to his freshly-laundered khakis.

Rounding a corner, his heart dropped at the sight awaiting him.

Beneath a large tower of toys sat a wooden circus cart. Its door was slightly ajar, and a small footpath from the door to where Mike was currently standing suggested someone... or something... had been here recently.

"Maybe it's just vagrants." he tried to convince himself to little avail.

Stepping forward, in spite of his better judgement, he quietly made his way up to the door of the cart, peeking inside. It indeed looked as though it had recently been occupied, with a space carved out amongst the pillows and blankets. Gazing around the small room, something shiny caught his attention — a small, silver phone.

On autopilot, he reached in to grab it, opening it up to find the item almost fully-charged, an unnaturally bright orange hair clinging to its screen. There was a recent missed call. He navigated to the call log. All outbound calls were to the same contact — simply listed as 'Bev'.

Could IT be back? Be calling and taunting her? Leaving her threatening messages?

No. The calls were long — 7 minutes, 16 minutes, 39 minutes... an hour and 51 minutes! They were *talking*. A glance at the text messages revealed that she had sent racy photos.

A wave of nausea hit Mike as he realized the unavoidable truth — Beverly's 'boyfriend' was no boyfriend at all. It was *IT*. The man he'd seen in the restaurant hadn't been a relative of the men from the history books. It hadn't been a man *at all*.

What was the monster planning? To take such care and invest so much time in tricking her, Mike knew it couldn't be good.

Carefully placing the phone back in the cart exactly as he remembered finding it, Mike sped back through the maze of pipes until he reached the river, frantically trying to decide his next steps. Beverly needed to know what was going on, but it was a delicate situation. He didn't want to scare her, as throwing her into a state of panic could cause the monster to cut his losses and end her life right then and there, once it knew she was aware of the situation.

His head was spinning, and he knew he wouldn't be able to think through this on his own. He needed input from another individual — someone smart and strategic, who had sufficient background knowledge to make an appropriate decision about how to approach the problem.

Bill.

Making his way back to the library, he did some digging and discovered that Bill Denbrough was now an up-and-coming horror writer living in nearby Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he taught writing workshops as an adjunct professor at Harvard. He dialed the number listed online, tapping his foot rapidly as it rang, nervous that nobody would pick up. It was an unfounded fear.

"Hello?" said the voice on the other end.

"H-hello!" Mike responded cheerfully, pleasantly surprised someone had answered. "Is this Bill Denbrough?"

"It is. What can I help you with?" Bill said.

"I don't know if you remember me, Bill," began Mike, "but I'm Mike Hanlon. We went to middle school together in Derry."

There was silence on the other end for a few moments, before Bill finally spoke up. "Yeah... yeah, I remember." he said simply.

"It sounds like you do." Mike replied, voice taking on a more somber tone upon realizing that Bill understood the basic reason Mike was calling him tonight.

"We have a problem." he continued. "How soon can you get here?"

"Shit." sighed Bill. "I can drive up in the morning. If I leave here by 8:00, I can be there by lunchtime."

"I'll see you then." Mike told him, hanging up the phone and preparing for a sleepless night

32. Confrontation

At 11:57am, a sleek silver sedan pulled into the Derry Public Library parking lot. Watching the window for the past 20 minutes, Mike immediately spotted a sandy-haired man with a face he'd recognize anywhere. Jumping out from behind his desk, he bounded outside and embraced Bill Denbrough in a tight, desperate hug.

"It's so good to see you!" he said softly, voice a strange mix of panic and genuine happiness.

"You too, Mike." replied Bill, stepping away to take in Mike's adult appearance. "Just wish it were under different circumstances."

A somber nod was Mike's only reply as he led Bill into the library, twisting around the "Be back in an hour" sign and locking the door.

Laid out on one of the expansive mahogany tables toward the back of the room was a collection of large, dusty books. Books about Derry. Post-it notes gingerly stuck to the open pages drew Bill's attention to a male figure, his appearance strikingly similar from one book to the next despite the differing time periods about which the books were written.

"Is that...?" Bill began, not quite sure how to finish the sentence.

"Have a seat." Mike instructed, pointing at the chair Bill was leaning against. "We have a lot to talk about."

Over the course of the next 20 minutes or so, Mike explained everything to Bill.

How he'd spotted a woman who appeared to be Beverly Marsh at the swanky little hole-in-the-wall down on 3rd Street, being thoroughly wooed by a handsome young man whose bone structure and posture nagged at the back of Mike's mind.

How, as it so happened, that lady was in fact Beverly Marsh, who had recently decided to move back to town because she had fallen in love.

How, while perusing books on the history of Old Derry to jog his memory before Beverly's return from California, he spotted a man in a photo who looked eerily similar to the man with whom Beverly had been dining.

How he then saw the face in another book. And another. And another.

"I didn't know what to do, so I went down there." Mike explained.

"Down where?" Bill asked, a look of confusion on his plain features.

"To the sewer, of course." said Mike, watching Bill's face with fascination as his memories seemed to reestablish themselves in real-time. Dawning realization and horror seemed to age him immediately, as his bright, sharp blue eyes turned dull and tired.

"I found a phone down there, Bill." Mike continued, snapping Bill back to reality. "There were calls on it. To and from Beverly. Long calls. They were having long conversations."

Mike paused for a moment, considering whether to share the next piece of information. It seemed rather private, but at the end of the day, he decided that Beverly's safety was at stake and thoroughness was important.

"She had also sent lingerie photos." he added quietly.

Bill cradled his head in both hands, lightly rubbing the temples. Releasing a heavy sigh, he looked up at Mike, searching his brown eyes for a moment.

"Bear with me here, Mike..." he began, "but is it possible that Beverly's boyfriend is homeless? And living down there because -- I don't know -- it's sheltered from the elements?"

"I wish." Mike sighed. "But there was a bright orange hair stuck to the screen. I'd recognize that hair anywhere, and I know you would too. Plus, your theory still doesn't explain why her boyfriend is in all of these books."

"Fuck. You're right." Bill admitted, eyes turned toward the books in

front of him once again. "Have you contacted her?"

Mike shook his head. "I considered it... but what if IT found out somehow? I don't want her to get hurt. I think we might be able to finish this before she gets thrown into a situation that's going to put her in real, immediate danger."

Bill nodded his agreement and opened his mouth to speak, feeling a familiar stickiness on his tongue. "O-okay." he said. "L-l-l-let's go find IT."

The pair made their way to the outlet on the bank of the river, rapidly navigating the maze of pipes until they made it to the expansive room that housed the circus cart and tower of toys. It was empty.

Cautiously looking around, Bill began to wonder whether they were wrong. There was nothing here. No monster, no dead bodies, no scent of blood and rotting flesh. He turned to Mike and opened his mouth to say something, but froze upon hearing splashing water. Footsteps. A voice. A... perfectly normal, human voice. Deep and smooth.

They looked at one another in confusion. The voice became clearer.

"I can't wait to see you, babe. It feels like we've been apart forever." the voice said. "Do you want me to meet you at the loft?"

There was a brief pause, during which wet footsteps were the only sound.

"Perfect! I'll head over in a few minutes, then. I just need to grab a few things." the voice continued. "I love you so much."

Another pause. The footsteps were getting closer.

"Me too. So much. I love you, Bev." it said at last.

Both Bill and Mike's eyes widened in dawning realization and horror at the last word. *Bev*.

The footsteps were deafening. An enormous figure rounded the corner, exiting its pipe and entering the room. It stepped into the

light cast down from the standpipe windows, and Bill and Mike saw the white, painted face at last.

Looking down at the phone in his hand, the clown didn't notice Bill and Mike until he was fewer than 10 feet from them. He looked up toward the circus cart and flinched dramatically, a gloved hand shooting to his chest as he froze in place with a look of shock and fear on his cartoonish features.

"Fuuuuuck..." he drawled. Straightening up, he caught his breath and attempted to put a warm smile on his face. "Uhh... Mike. Bill. What can I do for you?" he asked gently, hoping his casual, friendly tone would diffuse the tension.

"Why is it acting l-like this?" Bill hissed to Mike out of the corner of his mouth.

"Why am I acting like what, Bill?" Pennywise asked sharply, eyes drilling into Bill. He took great offense to Bill speaking as though he wasn't even there.

"It looks like a n-normal guy in a creepy clown costume." Bill continued to Mike, still refusing to address Pennywise directly. "That's not *IT* ... is it? It looks just like *IT*, but..."

Pennywise rolled his eyes and moved his hands to his hips in indignation. He cleared his throat dramatically.

"Is this better for you, Billy?!" he asked, face lighting up in a garishly animated display as the eerie, high-pitched voice that haunted Bill's nightmares returned to his ears for the first time in over 15 years.

Bill blinked rapidly as he leapt backward, nearly falling over in fear. He opened and closed his mouth repeatedly, attempting to form words but failing miserably, succeeding only in presenting a pretty decent impression of a fish.

Relaxing back into his normal posture and pleasing baritone, Pennywise smiled almost apologetically. "Now... was there something I could help you two with today?" he asked again.

Bill's face screwed up in rage as he charged at Pennywise, fists flying

wildly. The clown crossed both arms in front of his face in defense, but restrained himself from fighting back, choosing instead to simply let the human male tire himself out.

After what seemed like an eternity, Bill finally took a breather, stepping back to take in the face of the clown in front of him. Pennywise was glaring at him with crimson-rimmed irises as black blood floated out of his nose and lower lip. He doubled over in pain, placing his gloved hands on his knees and panting in a desperate attempt to catch his breath. Thanks to this humanoid form he occupied, he figured Bill must have broken a few of his ribs.

“Did you get it out of your system, Billy?” he coughed, looking up at the man in front of him clasping a bloodied hand against the plaid fabric at his chest. “Can we set aside the theatrics and talk like reasonable adults now?”

33. Discovery

“Reasonable adults? REASONABLE ADULTS?!” Bill was infuriated.

All of the exhaustion he’d been experiencing officially went out the window with Pennywise’s patronizing words.

Flying at the clown with fists raised high, he continued his beating, violently assaulting any part of Pennywise’s form that he could reach. Pennywise’s resolve to refrain from fighting back was wearing down. He mustered up the energy to stand up straight, towering over Bill’s slight form and snarling down at him with sharp fangs, when Bill suddenly began to speak. His words quieted Pennywise back down.

“What have you done to Beverly?!” he screamed.

Pennywise’s mouth relaxed and eyes widened. “What have I *done* to her?” he asked. “Nothing!”

“Liar!” Bill spat, throwing a particularly hard punch at Pennywise’s broken ribs, causing him to collapse to his knees in a fit of wheezing and hacking.

The clown looked to Mike, standing a few feet behind Bill with a conflicted look on his face. Mike wasn’t particularly thrilled about seeing Bill in this light, but it wasn’t exactly undeserved or unreasonable.

With pleading eyes, Pennywise seemed to address Mike directly, despite Bill being the interrogator. “I love her!” he choked out between blood-filled coughs.

“We’re... we’re in love.” he finished earnestly, eyes falling to the floor.

Mike’s brow furrowed and he opened his mouth to speak, when Bill piped back up.

“She could never love you!” he screamed. “Your little disguise may have worked up to this point, but she’ll learn the truth!”

Pennywise directed his gaze back to Bill, a smug smile threatening to erupt on his busted red lips. “She --”

He stopped, clamping his mouth shut as a wave of fear rushed through his body. Fear for Bev. Any desire to rub the truth in died when he came to the realization, not a second too soon, that if things continued down their current trajectory, he’d be placing Bev in danger by revealing that she already knew the truth.

“She what?!” pressed Bill. “What?!”

Pennywise sighed in sadness and resignation, gaze returning to the ground. “She’s... she’s everything to me.” he said in a pained tone. “She’s my everything. I love her, Bill.”

The room fell oddly silent for a moment, and he slowly looked back up, eyes darting between the two figures towering over him. One face filled with rage. One filled with pensiveness and worry. Addressing the latter, Pennywise continued.

“Mike, you saw us.” he said. “You saw how happy we are together. You... you have to believe me. I would never hurt her. *NEVER.*”

Mike looked at him thoughtfully for a moment, before beginning to speak so softly Pennywise had to lean forward and focus on his lips to make out his words.

“Even if I believed that you were capable of love,” Mike began.

“Which we definitely don’t!” interjected Bill.

“Even if I believed that you were capable of love,” continued Mike, shooting a scolding look in Bill’s direction, “you’ve done nothing to deserve love in return. Beverly *does* deserve love. But I don’t think she needs to learn the truth.”

Bill turned his body rapidly toward Mike, a look of alarm and outrage marring his features.

“I think that would only serve to traumatize her further.” Mike explained, watching Bill’s facial expression settle into a look of understanding and agreement. “That’s why we need to take you out

of the picture before she finds out.”

Pennywise’s breathing quickened as panic set in. A battle raged inside him - should he prioritize self-preservation by revealing the true nature of his relationship with Bev, or should he continue to protect her, knowing that he could die and she would continue to live on with Bill and Mike knowing her darkest secret?

He opened his mouth to speak, when all of a sudden a distant noise caused everyone’s eyes to shoot toward the drainpipe in the corner of the room. Wet footsteps, much like the ones Bill and Mike had heard just a while ago.

“Did you lose track of time, babe?” called a warm female voice.

Beverly rounded the corner and entered the room, yelping in surprise and alarm at the unexpected visages of Bill Denbrough and Mike Hanlon. Not yet noticing Pennywise’s crumpled form on the floor behind them, she flinched and gasped loudly when he called out to her.

“Bev!” his pained voice cried out.

“Oh my god!” she shrieked, hand shooting to her mouth.

“Beverly, it’s okay!” Mike began, attempting to console her. “We’re going to end th-”

His voice was drowned out by the clown’s, louder and more determined than it had been all day. “Bev, I love you!” he said, attempting to stand, but collapsing in pain once again. “I just need you to know that, no matter what happens. I love you so much!”

Beverly rushed to him, nearly knocking over the two standing Losers. Running her hands over his body, she inspected his injuries, sobbing and whispering comforting words.

“You’re okay. It’s going to be okay.” she assured him. “I’m here. I’m here now. I love you so much.”

Coming to the realization that he was badly beaten, while Bill and Mike remained unharmed aside from Bill’s bloody fist, she turned her

head to glare at them over her shoulder.

“What did you do to him?!” she screamed, her rage causing them to shrink in on themselves a bit.

“Bev, what the fuck are you doing?!” hissed Bill, ignoring her question altogether. “Are you trying to get killed?! Stay away from IT! We’re here to finish this off, once and for all.”

“No! If you want to kill him, you’re going to have to kill me first!” Beverly snarled in response, turning to face Pennywise again, determined to provide him some comfort but having difficulty keeping her emotional response to seeing him like this tamped down.

“Bev, please. Please, don’t do this, babe. I can’t let you get hurt over me. Please.” begged Pennywise, gravity-defying tears leaking from his golden eyes as he wiped her own away with his gloved thumbs.

Mike froze at the surreal vision in front of him - Pennywise was *protecting* Bev. He called her *'babe'*. He... IT... was literally on its knees begging her to move so that no harm would come to her at the hands of the other two Losers. IT was even *crying*. What kind of game was this? Were the claims of love... *true*?

He continued to watch in awe as the clown pressed a gentle kiss to Bev’s lips, then her forehead, before pulling her into a tight embrace, screwing his eyes tightly closed.

“I love you. God, I love you so much, Bev. Please... please go. You can’t die over me.” Pennywise sobbed into Bev’s fiery red hair, not caring who might see him acting so weak. All that mattered to him in this moment was that Bev understood the depth of his love for her, and that she remained safe.

“Beverly Marsh! What in the actual, ever-living *fuck* is going on?!” screamed Bill, unable to make any sense of the scene unfolding in front of him. “Have you been *possessed*?!”

34. Considerations

Suddenly coming to her senses, Beverly turned to face Bill and Mike, slowly standing up with her body firmly planted between the two unharmed men and her injured partner. Raising her hands in front of her chest in a motion she'd seen convey a peace offering in countless TV shows and films, she began to speak.

"Bill... Mike... I know how crazy this must seem to you." she told them in a slow, deliberate tone. "But Penn and I have been... seeing each other."

They were speechless, mouths falling open in shock. The monster hadn't been lying to them. And what's more - she knew *exactly* who she was dating. *What in the actual fuck?*

After a moment of awkward silence, she continued.

"When my father died a few weeks ago, I came down here to investigate. I assume that's not too far off from what you two were planning to do today." she said. "My return... woke him up. But he woke up... *different*. He's not the same person we knew back then, guys!"

"Beverly..." Mike began gently, "IT is not a person at all."

Beverly screwed her eyes shut in a pained expression, sighing heavily and choosing not to respond to Mike's comment.

Bill had begun to experience a fresh wave of fear at discovering that Beverly was willingly involved with the monster that killed his brother and tried to kill them as teens. This twist likely meant that putting an end to IT once and for all would be significantly more difficult. They had lost perhaps their most powerful warrior.

"I-i-is this some sort of... Stockholm S-syndrome thing?!" he stuttered.

"No!" she practically shrieked, appalled by the suggestion. "Bill, I'm not his prisoner. I've been in California for the past few days, for

God's sake!"

"Right." Bill said, conceding that she couldn't be held captive from thousands of miles away. "Then this m-must be some sort of sp-spell. Once we f-finish him off, you'll be free of it."

Beverly began to panic again. Tears welling up in her eyes and breath quickening, she clasped her hands in front of her body in a prayer-like gesture.

"Please, guys. Please!" she begged, eyes darting between the two forms in front of her. "I'm not under any sort of spell. I love him! And he loves me!"

"Beverly, we swore an oath." Mike reminded her scoldingly. "We swore that if this monster ever returned, we'd come back and defeat it permanently."

Tears fell from Beverly's eyes at last, as she looked over her shoulder at Pennywise, still kneeling in pain on the floor, looking up at her fearfully. "I don't know what I can say to make you believe me," she began, looking back to Mike, "but that monster has been defeated. The Pennywise sitting here in front of you is not the one you remember from years ago. He's... different. He's not a monster."

"You expect us to believe IT's a v-vegan now or something?!" Bill scoffed.

"No." Beverly said quietly, looking down at the ground. "But he's not going after innocents! And definitely no children!"

Bill quirked an eyebrow at her skeptically before turning to address Mike. "How many children have gone missing from Derry in the past couple months?"

Somehow he knew Mike would have looked into those figures. He was correct in this assumption.

"None." Mike confirmed. "The only person to go missing within a 50 mile radius is a meth dealer with an extensive criminal record... so that's not exactly unexpected."

No, it wasn't unexpected, but Bill was still suspicious. He moved his head so that Beverly's body was no longer blocking his view of Pennywise. "Your work?" he spat.

The clown looked down. A brief flash of an emotion Bill would have identified as shame, if he didn't know better, covered his features. He didn't speak, but he nodded somberly.

Bill sighed loudly. Internally, a war was raging. As much as he hated to admit it to himself, he was actually pleasantly surprised by Pennywise's honesty, and by the fact that there hadn't been any missing children. But the hatred he felt toward the monster that had stolen the promising life of young Georgie, and attempted to steal the promising lives of the Losers Club, still reigned supreme. And, above all else, he trusted Pennywise about as far as he could throw him... which, given his enormous size, wasn't very far at all.

"Call the others." he instructed Mike, who responded with a curt nod. "Tell them they're needed on an urgent matter in Derry."

He paused for a moment, before adding on an additional request. Shooting a glance at Pennywise's crumpled form, he closed his eyes and rubbed his temples. In a strained voice that suggested he was having great difficulty forcing himself to swallow his pride and spit out the necessary words, he said "Tell them not to worry. There's no immediate threat. But to get here immediately, regardless."

Beverly let out a small, relieved laugh as she turned her body back to Pennywise, falling to her knees and embracing him. He flinched a bit at the pressure on his ribs, but refused to let her go.

"I hope you know we're not letting that thing out of our sight." Bill hissed at her.

"Well..." she began, standing up and glancing at her watch. "I have a furniture delivery arriving in about an hour. If you're going to treat me like a child who can't be trusted on her own, you might as well come over to the new loft and help move it all in. You can sleep on the couch after, as a reward for the manual labor. I'll even be nice and order some pizzas."

Noticing Pennywise perk up at the mention of pizza, Mike's face screwed up in a comical mix of surprise and confusion.

"Do you... eat pizza?" he asked. His tone was much gentler than Bill's, causing the corner of Pennywise's mouth to quirk up in a tiny, warm smile. He nodded, grateful that Mike was speaking to him like a person, not a thing. And grateful that he'd be getting pizza after the trying day he'd experienced.

Mike suddenly felt a bit dumb, remembering that he saw Pennywise eating human food with Beverly that night at the restaurant. His brain, not used to shapeshifting creatures, hadn't made the connection until this moment. Clearly IT could eat human food, if it had done so that evening.

Stepping forward, he held a hand out toward Pennywise. The clown stared at it as though it might bite him for a moment, before looking up at Mike's face. Mike raised his eyebrows and tilted his head slightly, looking at Pennywise expectantly.

The clown tentatively placed his gloved hand in Mike's, using it for balance as he stood up. Towering over Mike, he gave an awkward, but appreciative smile. "Thanks." he whispered, so quietly that Bill couldn't hear.

Mike gave a single, curt nod before turning on his heel and making his way toward the drainpipe.

"Unlike him, I'm n-n-not t-turning my back on you." Bill jabbed, secretly disappointed that his stuttering was getting in the way of sounding as intimidating as he had hoped. He motioned toward the drainpipe with his battered hand. "Go."

Pennywise hobbled toward the exit, one arm strewn across Beverly's shoulders to aid him in his balance. Bill followed a few feet behind.

"I'm so sorry, babe." Beverly whispered apologetically. "This is just about the worst reunion after my trip, huh?"

Pennywise kissed her gently on the temple, ignoring Bill's disgusted scoff. "I love you, Bev." he whispered back to her. "We're going to

figure this out.”

When they reached the river, Bill instructed everyone to stop for a moment. “We can’t go out in public view with you looking like this.” he said. “Change into Beverly’s boyfriend.”

Beverly fought the urge to roll her eyes and remind him that the clown was the form of her boyfriend. Instead, she turned to Pennywise, placing her hands on his slumped shoulders. “Do you have enough energy?” she asked him, looking him up and down.

“I think so.” he groaned. “Just give me a moment. It might be slower than normal.”

He lifted his head to look at Bill and Mike, standing next to one another on a rock ledge a few feet away. “You may want to close your eyes for this.” he warned them.

“Ha! I th-think not!” Bill shouted in reply.

“Suit yourself.” Pennywise shrugged. For a moment he became excited about the idea of watching their faces screw up in horror at the sight that was about to bombard their eyes, but a glance toward Bev tamped down this urge. He needed to play nice as much as possible if he wanted to continue to have a life with her.

Pennywise therefore decided to turn his own back on the Losers, figuring that the most disturbing part of his transformation would be the effect it had on his face. They’d still likely be a bit horrified by the view of his back, too, but not nearly as much as if they could see his facial features twisting and contorting in a grotesque display.

When the transformation was finished, he slowly turned around.

“Whoa...” Bill whispered, jaw dropping open slightly in awe. Against his better judgement, he stepped forward, inspecting the handsome man in front of him, entirely human aside from the floating black blood oozing out of his smooth, pink lips and gracefully pointed nose.

“Why did you pick a form that looks so much like the clown if you didn’t want to get caught?” Bill asked with a frown, eyes curiously

skimming the man's cheekbones and jawline.

"Uhh..." Pennywise began, not sure how to word it. "This is the clown. *Was* the clown."

Bill looked confused for a moment before a look of understanding crossed his face. The clown -- *Pennywise* -- had been a real person, and this was what he looked like out of the makeup. And though he had gotten a grainy glimpse at the face in Mike's library books, it was an entirely different experience seeing the form in person. He was... *hot*. That was something Bill never expected he'd have to come to terms with.

Clearing his throat and looking away awkwardly, Bill turned to face the road. "Right." he said, with a motion toward his car, parked on a small gravel pull-out. "Shall we?"

35. Calls

After a brief but tense car ride, they had arrived at Beverly's new building. Stepping into the lobby, Beverly directed them to the back of the room, where they piled into a sleek elevator and Beverly punched a passcode into the control panel, unlocking the ability to access the fourth floor, occupied entirely by Beverly's penthouse loft. Pennywise gave a small flinch when the machine began to move, looking around in a daze.

Beverly gave him an amused smile upon realizing that he'd never been in an elevator before. "You'll get used to it." she mouthed.

When the elevator had reached the fourth floor, it opened straight into her new living room, revealing soaring cathedral ceilings with original wood beams, exposed brick walls, and windows large enough to see all of downtown Derry, situated atop a steep-walled canal.

Bill and Mike exited the elevator in awe, spinning around to look at every visible inch of the incredible space.

"Jesus, Beverly. This is amazing." Bill said reverently. "Derry must really be on the up-and-up, huh?"

She told him about her landlord and his husband, whose company was one of a multitude of wealthy investment firms looking to capitalize on the Derry renaissance.

"It's almost as if a 15 year crime-free stretch makes a town an appealing place to live." Mike mumbled snarkily under his breath, shooting a glance to Pennywise. He softened a bit at seeing the look on the human form's face - a look that was just as full of awe and wonder as the ones he and Bill wore. Mike found it... *humanizing*... for lack of a better word.

Beverly grabbed her partner's left arm in both of hers, snuggling up beside him. Turning her head to look up at his awestruck face, she whispered, "What do you think?"

"Babe... I love it." he said earnestly, gazing down at her with wide

eyes. For the first time in his billions of years of existence, he had a warm, cozy, *beautiful* home... instead of a sewer and a condemned, abandoned old house. And, if he was lucky, he'd get to share it with this incredible human beside him. He felt tears beginning to prick at his eyes as he looked down at her, but a loud beeping noise broke his concentration.

"Oh, crap! That's the delivery truck!" Beverly exclaimed. "Which one of you wants to come down and help me get the stuff out of the truck and onto the sidewalk?"

"I'll go." Bill offered, before turning to address Mike "You stay here and call the others. Don't let *IT* out of your sight."

With an eye roll and a dramatic gesture toward the elevator, Beverly led Bill back downstairs. Mike took a folded piece of notebook paper out of his breast pocket and set it down on the expansive marble kitchen island. He began to type in the first number, but paused at hearing Pennywise awkwardly clear his throat. Looking up at the entity curiously, Pennywise began to speak softly.

"Do you mind if I change back into the clown?" he asked, wringing his hands and looking down at the patterns in the hardwood floor. "This form is... uncomfortable."

"Yeah, sure. Whatever." Mike said, waving his hand in a dismissive gesture and beginning to dial the phone. Out of the corner of his eye he could tell that the other figure in the room now sported bright orange hair and a strange silver costume. He wondered whether the clown always wore that strange costume when Beverly and he were alone together, but his train of thought was interrupted when a voice came through the telephone.

Stanley Uris

"Hello?" said a small, nervous voice. Stanley Uris had received a call from the area code serving Derry, Maine. This couldn't be good. He couldn't remember exactly why, but he knew he was panicking now.

"Stanley Uris?" Mike asked. When he received a hum of

confirmation, he continued on “You might not remember me very well, but this is Mike Hanlon, from Derry.”

The line was silent for a moment, before Stan softly said “I remember you.”

His memories had flooded back in record time. “It’s back, isn’t it?” he asked quietly, voice trembling.

“It’s not what you think.” Mike assured him, attempting to put a peppy tone in his own voice to comfort Stan. He’d always been delicate. “We need you here, but there’s nothing to worry about at the moment. Everything’s...” he paused, glancing over at the clown curiously inspecting Beverly’s shiny new stainless steel kitchen appliances. “Everything’s okay.”

Mike was silent for a while, piquing Pennywise’s interest. He could hear muffled sounds coming through the phone. Finally they stopped. “Don’t worry about that stuff.” Mike said. “I’ll reserve a room, and I’ll book you a flight out of Atlanta tomorrow. I’ll send you all the details so you know what time it departs, and whether you’ll be flying into Portland or Bangor. Just... give me a couple hours.”

Stan had no other logical objections now. Begrudgingly, he agreed and they said their goodbyes. Mike hung up the phone and removed his glasses to rub at his eyes, releasing a heavy sigh.

Next on the list:

Richie Tozier

Mike braced himself for the conversation to come. Of all the Losers, it would surely take the most energy to keep up with Richie. He dialed the number, surprised when Richie picked up on the first ring, not even having taken the time to glance at the Caller ID.

“Tozier.” he said slickly, rather than the typical ‘hello’ or ‘who’s this?’

“Hi Richie.” Mike responded. “I don’t know if you remember me, but this is Mike Hanlon... from Derry.”

“Shit, Mike. Yeah. I remember you, man.” Richie said with a small laugh. “How the hell are you, dude? It’s been, what, 15 years?”

“I’m... doing okay.” Mike said hesitantly. “Do you have any idea why I’m calling you?”

“I uhh...” Richie paused, cheery voice faltering. “I feel like I should. Like it’s right on the tip of my tongue. But... I can’t quite remember what it is I’m supposed to know.”

“You will.” Mike promised. “But you need to come to Derry. Tomorrow. Can you do that? I’m sure there will be a flight out of LAX in the morning. I can book it for you and send you the details. I’ll also book you a hotel room.”

“Why that’s mighty romantic of ‘ya, Mr. Hanlon!” joked Richie in a thick Southern drawl. “Are you going to woo me with a nice steak dinner, too?”

Hearing silence, Richie cleared his throat and resumed his normal speaking voice. “I’m just kidding, man. I’ll get my own plane ticket, and if you just put my name down to block the room, that’ll work just fine. I’ll take care of the rest when I get there.”

“Sounds great, Richie.” Mike told him. “Just let me know when you expect to arrive. Looking forward to seeing you again!”

Eddie Kaspbrak

Eddie Kaspbrak’s name appeared next on Mike’s battered piece of notebook paper. He again braced himself for the conversation sure to come, but for a different reason. Eddie was never one to go quietly into a dangerous situation. He eventually came around, more to keep an eye on the others than out of an actual desire to be involved in whatever mess was occurring, but it was a battle. And it surely would be today, too.

He dialed the number and took a deep breath. After two rings, a frazzled voice came through. “Yes, hello?” it said. It was a woman.

“Umm... is this the Kaspbrak residence?” Mike asked.

“Yes, who is this?” the woman responded.

Mike was relieved to at least learn that his contact information was correct. He proceeded to tell the woman -- whom he gathered to be Eddie's new wife, Myra -- that he was a childhood friend of her husband's.

“I've never heard of you.” she said skeptically. “My Eddie would have mentioned you.”

“We drifted apart many years ago.” Mike told her by way of an explanation, though he knew that there was another reason Eddie had forgotten about him. “Is he around? Could I speak to him?”

The woman sighed in annoyance, before putting a hand over the phone's mic. He could hear a muffled call for “Eddie-kins”... and then another for “Boo Bear”. Finally, Eddie's voice came through the phone.

Mike was pleased to find that Eddie's memory of him returned almost instantaneously upon hearing Mike's voice. But, as expected, getting him to Maine was going to be a challenge.

“I don't know if Myra would let me get away on such short notice.” he told Mike.

Mike reminded him of the oath they swore to one another, knowing that Eddie's role as ‘the mom friend’ would cause him to feel a sense of duty to the others. He finally conceded to the pressure, and Mike could hear him unzipping a bag to toss countless bottles of pills inside.

“Eddie, what are you doing up there?!” Myra's shrill voice rang. Eddie did not respond.

“I'll be there in the morning.” he said to Mike, hanging up without so much as a ‘goodbye’.

Mike had reached the final name on his list: Ben Hanscom.

He tapped his fingers on the island in silent contemplation for a moment. Of all the members of the Losers Club, he was least confident that his information for Ben Hanscom was correct. The only Ben Hanscom he could find contact info for was an up-and-coming architect... and part-time male model, who had recently snagged a coveted contract as a spokesmodel for Rolex watches. This particular Ben Hanscom could be seen gracing the pages of GQ or Vogue in any given month.

The architect thing, Mike could see. Ben was always good at building things. But a high-end male model? Really? Ben?

He picked up the phone to dial the number listed on the paper, despite his lack of confidence that he'd be reaching the correct man. It went to voicemail.

"You've reached Ben Hanscom. Please leave a message after the beep and I'll return your call as soon as possible." the voice said. So Mike did.

Just a minute or two later, Mike's phone rang.

"Mike Hanlon!" the voice on the other side exclaimed. "God, talk about a blast from the past!"

Mike laughed in relief and a giddy sense of accomplishment at finding the correct man, after all. He was still shocked that Ben had apparently become a model, but he supposed folks changed a lot between middle school and their late 20s.

Ben's happy tone fell as Mike briefed him on the fact that he was needed back in Derry. Immediately.

"I can book you a flight from..." Mike paused for a moment. "Where are you living right now, Chicago?"

"Yes, but no need." Ben assured him. "I'm working on a new high-rise project in Montreal right now. I can take the train down after my 9:30 meeting tomorrow morning. I ought to be there by late

afternoon, if my math is correct.”

They hung up after exchanging a few pleasantries, and Mike took the pen sitting on the kitchen island to draw a small checkmark next to each name.

...

The Losers Club would be reunited tomorrow in Derry, Maine.